

HARLAN ELLISON was recently characterized by *The New York Times Book Review* as having "the spellbinding quality of a great nonstop talker, with a cultural warehouse for a mind." *The Los Angeles Times* suggested, "It's long past time for Harlan Ellison to be awarded the title: 20th century Lewis Carroll." And the *Washington Post Book World* said simply, "One of the great living American short story writers."

He has written or edited 75 books, more than 1,300 stories, essays, articles, and newspaper columns; two dozen teleplays, for which he received the Writers Guild of America most outstanding teleplay award for solo work an unprecedented four times; and a dozen movies. He won the Mystery Writers of America Edgar Allan Poe Award twice, the Horror Writers Association Bram Stoker Award six times (including The Lifetime Achievement Award in 1996), the Nebula three times, the Hugo eight and a half times, and received the Silver Pen for Journalism from P.E.N. Not to mention The World Fantasy Award, the British Fantasy Award, the American Mystery Award, two Audie Awards, the Ray Bradbury Award, and a Grammy nomination for Spoken Word recordings.

Mr. Ellison worked as a consultant and host for the radio series 2000⁺, a series of 26 one-hour dramatized radio adaptations of famous SF stories for The Hollywood Theater of the Ear. The series was broadcast on National Public Radio (NPR) in 2000 and 2001. Ellison's classic story "Repent, Harlequin! Said the Tocktackman" was included as part of this significant series, starring Robin Williams, with the author in the role of Narrator. Harlan Ellison was awarded the Ray Bradbury Award For Drama Series: For Program Host & Creative Consultant; NPR Presentation of 2000⁺.

He created great fantasies for *The Twilight Zone* (including Danny Kaye's final performance) and *The Outer Limits*; traveled with The Rolling Stones; marched with Martin Luther King from Selma to Montgomery; once stood off the son of a Mafia kingpin with a Remington XP-100, while wearing nothing but a bath towel — and probably is the most contentious person now walking the Earth. But the bottom line, as voiced by Booklist last year, is this: "One thing's for sure: the man can write."

PAUL CHADWICK has worked widely as an artist and writer for comics, with collaborators like Ron Randall, Doug Wheatley, Alan Moore, John Bolton, Jan Strnad, Randy Stradley, Archie Goodwin, Brian K. Vaughan, and others. He's most noted for his award-winning series *Concrete*.

After graduating from Art Center College of Design in 1979, he began storyboarding movies for Disney, Warner Bros., Lucasfilm and others. Credits include Pee Wee's Big Adventure, Strange Brew, The Big Easy and Ewoks: The Battle for Endor. He also freelanced illustration for movie advertising and for SF and fantasy paperbacks.

Chadwick then decided to devote himself to comics, though occasionally he's pulled out of the field; he was lead writer of continuity for the MMORPG *The Matrix Online*, based on the Matrix movies. His most recent *Concrete* comic was *Three Uneasy Pieces*.

He lives on San Juan Island in Washington State with his wife Elizabeth, also an artist.

"It's long past time for Harlan Ellison to be awarded the title: 20th century Lewis Carroll."
—THE LOS ANGELES TIMES

"One of the great living American short story writers." —WASHINGTON POST BOOK WORLD

"One thing's for sure: the man can write." —BOOKLIST



In the far-flung future, humanity has colonized the solar system, conquered its genetics, and mastered its destiny. Decadent societies sprawl across the known worlds, built on the backs of slaves—powerful robots and extraordinary "reordered" humans, designed for war, labor and pleasure alike.

But humanity's hubris is about to meet its nemesis. A fire buried millions of years ago is flaring up to consume them all, stoked by an enemy who will stop at nothing to see mankind wiped from existence. And the fate of history itself lies in the hands of seven of society's rejects:

Urr, the renegade robot... Moura, the seven-foot Amazon with claws for hands... Tantalus, the insect-man... Ayleen, Venusian noblewoman whose fire power threatens to consume her... Roorn, the cat burglar with no face... Kennus, the disgraced technologist who's as paranoid as he is brilliant... and the mysterious Robed Man with scarred hands who gathered them.

Only these seven stand against the coming chaos. Can they come together to save the very species that spurned them?

dccomics.com Printed and bound in the USA



\$26.99 USA \$28.99 CAN ISBN: 978-1-4012-3910-7

Harlan Ellison, science fiction's brightest luminary, has joined forces with multi-award-winning artist Paul Chadwick, creator of *Concrete*, and *Night and the Enemy* colorist Ken Steacy to bring you **7 AGAINST CHAOS**, an original never-before-seen graphic novel that is singular, powerful and unpredictable. This extraordinary odyssey of mystery and adventure will take you to the rim of reality and beyond.

"[Ellison has] the spellbinding quality of a great nonstop talker, with a cultural warehouse for a mind."
—THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

HARLAN ELLISON'S 7 AGAINST CHAOS

BY HARLAN ELLISON AND
PAUL CHADWICK WITH KEN STEACY



**REJECTS. MISFITS.
CAST-OFFS. CRIMINALS.
KILLERS. SLAVES...
AND SAVIORS**

Harlan Ellison, science fiction's brightest luminary, has joined forces with multi-award-winning artist Paul Chadwick, creator of *Concrete*, to bring you *7 AGAINST CHAOS*, a graphic novel that is singular, powerful and unpredictable. This extraordinary odyssey of mystery and adventure will take you to the rim of reality and beyond.

In a distant future, Earth is in grave danger: The fabric of reality itself is unraveling, leading to catastrophic natural disasters, displaced souls appearing from bygone eras, and sudden, shocking cases of spontaneous combustion. The only hope for Earth's survival is a force of seven warriors, each with his or her special abilities. But can these alien seven samurai learn to get along in time to find the source of the gathering chaos and save all of reality?



DC
ENTERTAINMENT





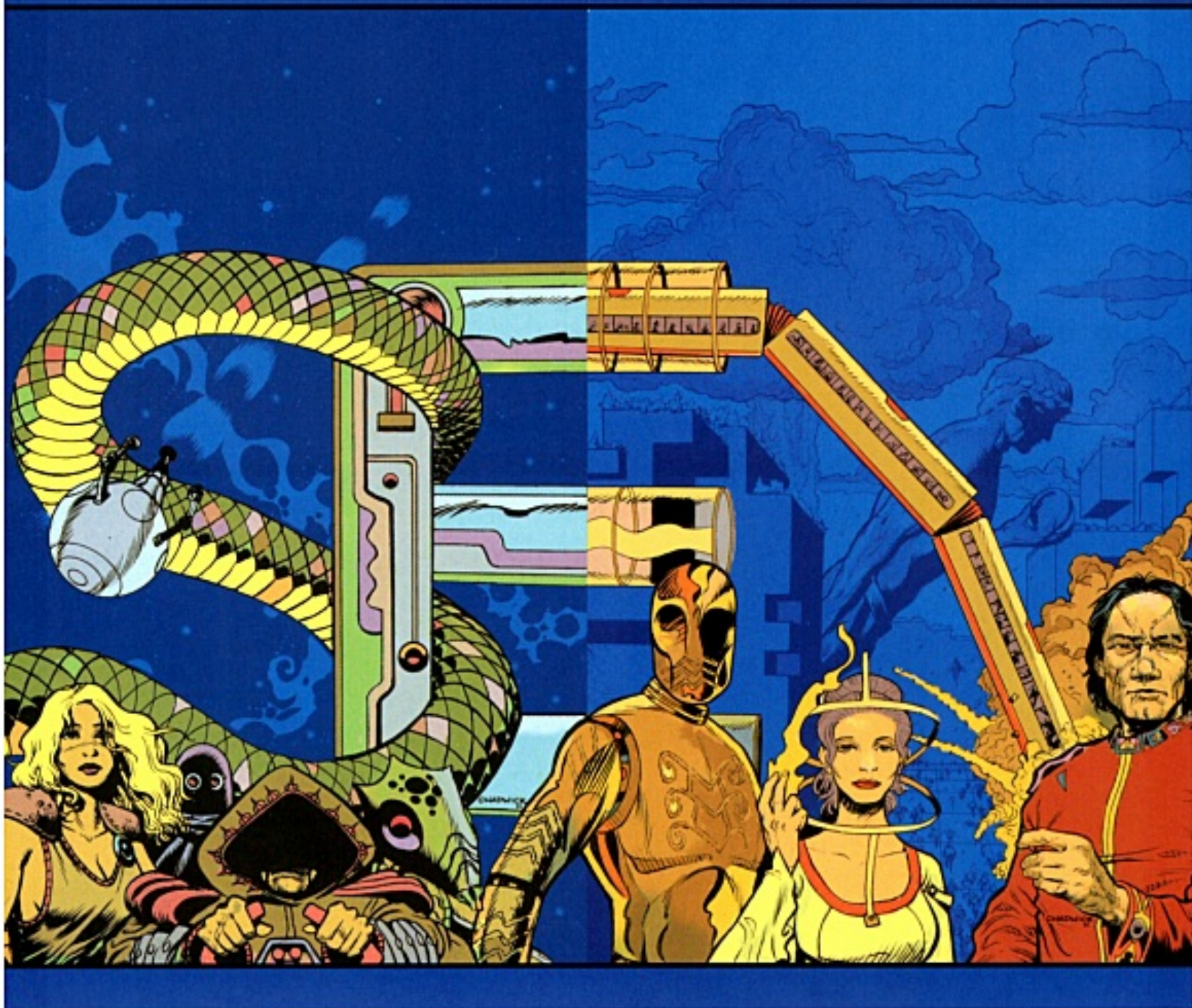




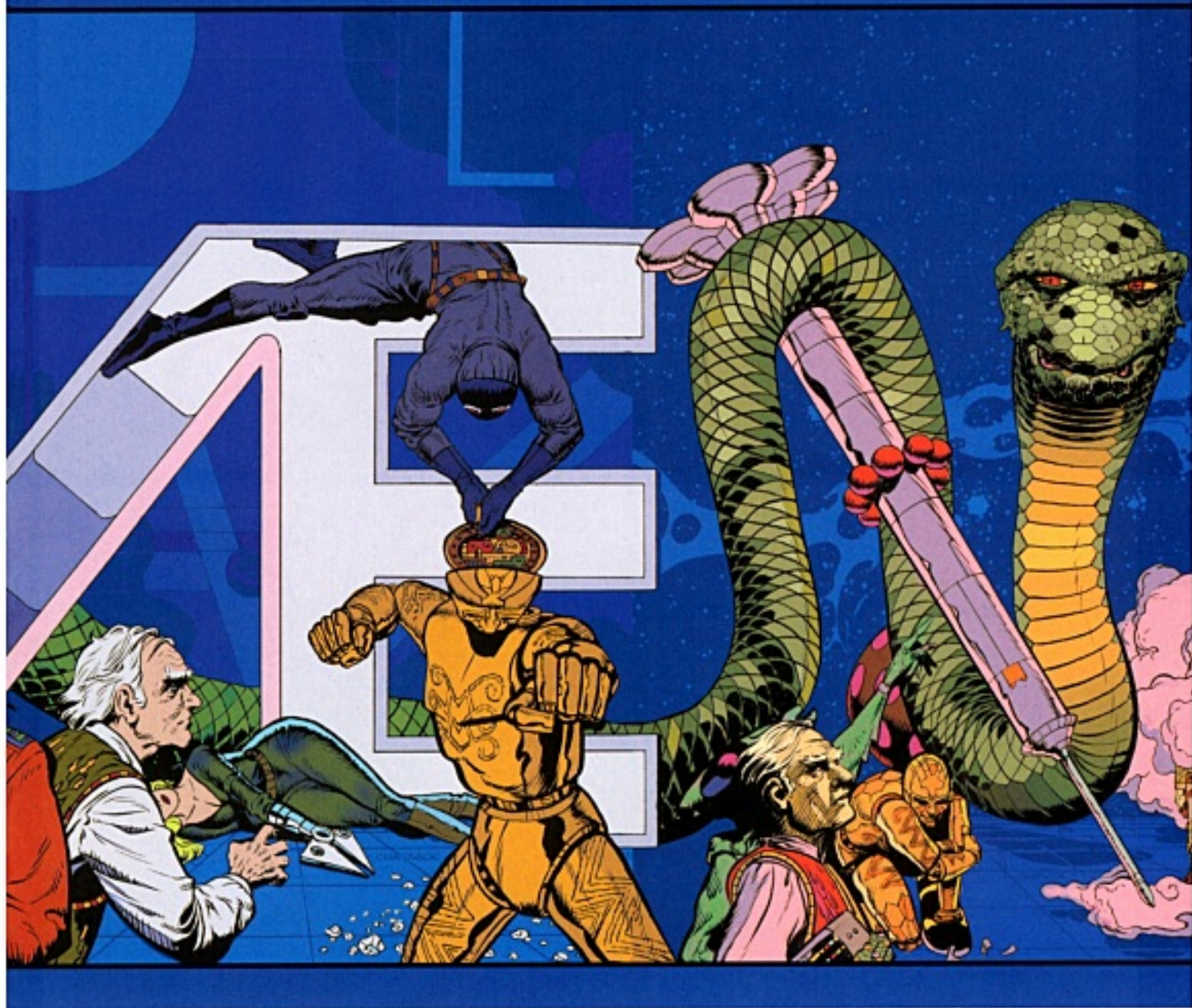


HARLAN
ELLISON'S
7 AGAINST
CHAOS





HARLAN ELLISON'S
**7 AGAINST
CHAOS**



STORY AND ART BY
HARLAN ELLISON & PAUL CHADWICK

KEN STEACY

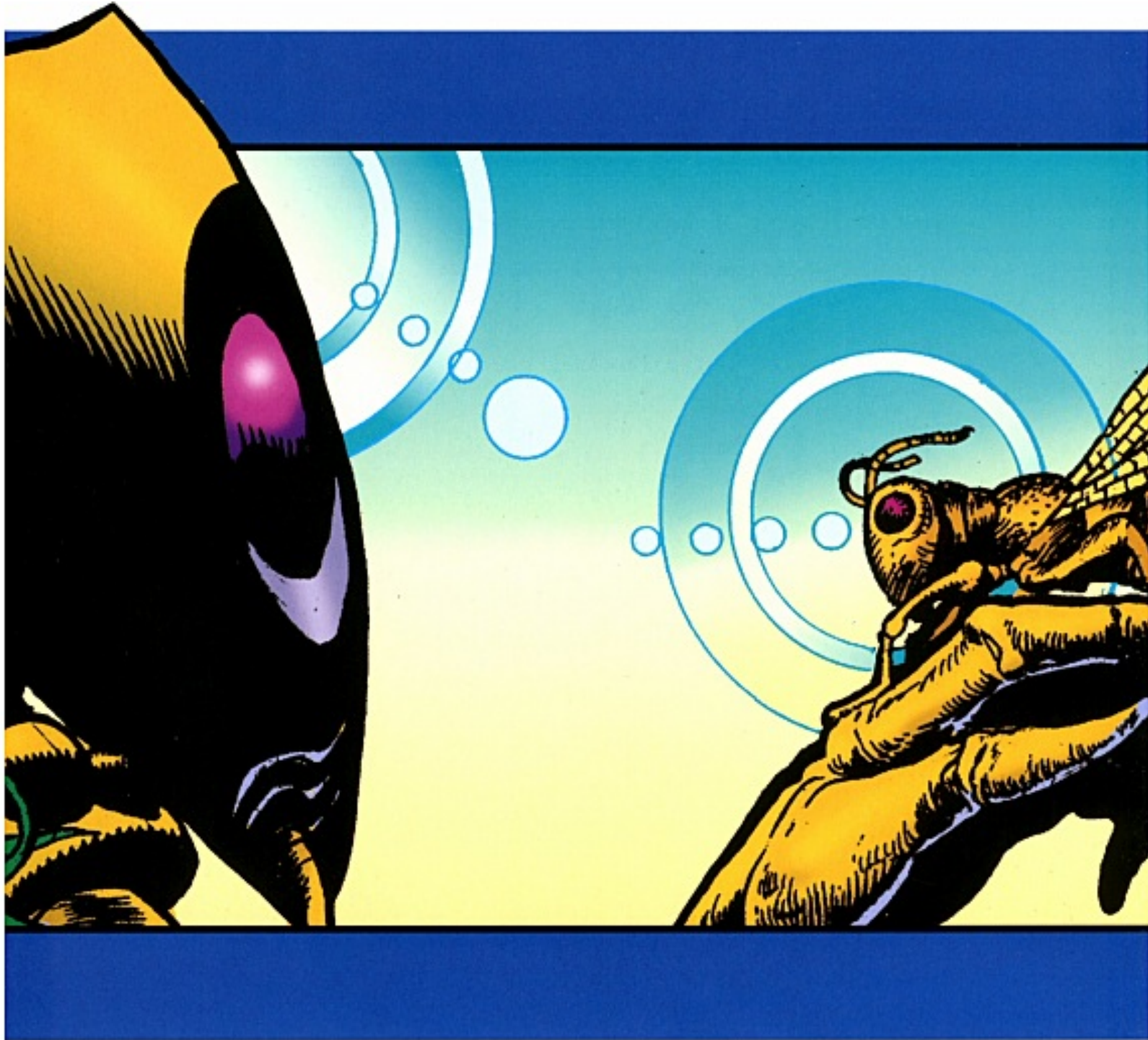
Colorist

TODD KLEIN

Letterer

PAUL CHADWICK

Cover art



Bobbie Chase Peter Hamboussi Editors
Robbin Brosterman Design Director - Books
Curtis King Jr. Publication Design
Bob Harras Senior VP - Editor-in-Chief, DC Comics
Diane Nelson President
Dan DiDio and Jim Lee Co-Publishers
Geoff Johns Chief Creative Officer
John Rood Executive VP - Sales, Marketing and Business Development
Amy Jenkins Senior VP - Business and Legal Affairs
Nairi Gardiner Senior VP - Finance
Jeff Boison VP - Publishing Planning
Mark Chiarello VP - Art Direction and Design
John Cunningham VP - Marketing
Terri Cunningham VP - Editorial Administration
Alison Gill Senior VP - Manufacturing and Operations
Hank Kanalz Senior VP - Vertigo and Integrated Publishing
Jay Kogan VP - Business and Legal Affairs, Publishing
Jack Mahan VP - Business Affairs, Talent
Nick Napolitano VP - Manufacturing Administration
Sue Pohja VP - Book Sales
Courtney Simmons Senior VP - Publicity
Bob Wayne Senior VP - Sales

HARLAN ELLISON'S® 7 AGAINST CHAOS

Published by DC Comics. Cover and compilation Copyright © 2013 The Kilimanjaro Corporation. All Rights Reserved. All characters, their distinctive likenesses and related elements featured in this publication are trademarks of The Kilimanjaro Corporation. The stories, characters and incidents featured in this publication are entirely fictional. DC Comics does not read or accept unsolicited ideas, stories or artwork.

DC Comics, 1700 Broadway, New York, NY 10019.
 A Warner Bros. Entertainment Company
 Printed in the USA, 6/7/13, First Printing.
 HC ISBN: 978-1-4012-3910-7



**SUSTAINABLE
FORESTRY
INITIATIVE**

Certified Chain of Custody
 At Least 20% Certified Forest Content

www.sfi-program.org
 SF-COC-12
 APRIL 10/11/12/13/14/15

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Ellison, Harlan.
 Harlan Ellison's 7 against chaos / Harlan Ellison, Paul Chadwick.
 pages cm
 ISBN 978-1-4012-3910-7
 I. Graphic novels. II. Chadwick, Paul (Paul H.) III. Title. IV. Title: 7
 against chaos. V. Title: Seven against chaos.
 PN6728.E45A63 2013
 741.5'973—dc23

2013009147

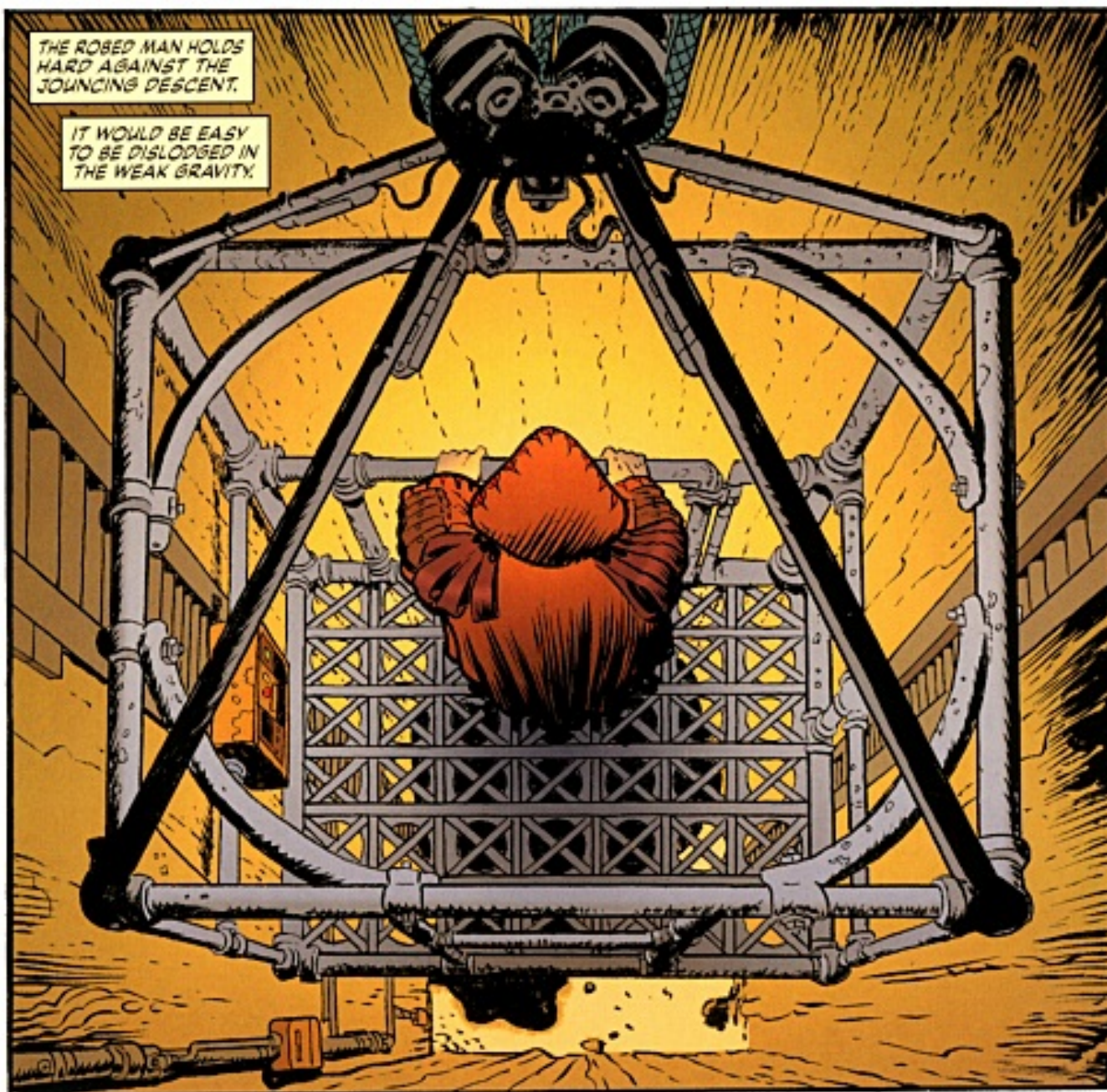
SCARRED HANDS
GRIP THE RAILING.

SCARRED WALLS
FLOW PAST.



THE ROBED MAN HOLDS
HARD AGAINST THE
JOUNCING DESCENT.


IT WOULD BE EASY
TO BE DISLODGED IN
THE WEAK GRAVITY.



THE JOVIAN MOON
CALLISTO GRIPS
ITS DENIZENS LIGHTLY.

EVEN SO, THEY
NEVER
ESCAPE.






OVERSEERS ASSUME
THE ROBED MAN IS
AN INSPECTOR FROM
ABOVE.

A SLAVE WORKER WOULD NEVER
WEAR ROBES IN SUCH HEAT; AND
NOBODY WOULD EVER BREAK
IN TO THE HELLFIRE MINES.



HUMANS, SOME
REORDERED
AS EMBRYOS,
NOW STAND
MONSTROUS
AND SWEATING,
DOING WORK
THAT DESTROYS
BOTH **SOUL**
AND **BODY**.

FOR EVEN AS ITS REACH
HAS GROWN TO SEIZE
OTHER WORLDS AND
NEW SCIENTIFIC
WONDERS, 22ND
CENTURY HUMANITY'S
NATURE IS UNCHANGED.



MAN EXPLOITS MAN.

AND WOMAN.

AND LUST AND PLEASURE
ARE CHASED TO **EVER-**
NEW PLACES.

THEY MINE
A COLLOIDAL
SUBSTANCE
FOUND NO-
WHERE ELSE.

FRACTIONED, DISTILLED,
REFINED, IT BECOMES
SOMETHING NEW.

A PILL.

CALLISTAN FREEBOOTERS, USING SLAVES
STOLEN FROM EVERY PLANET IN THE SYSTEM,
PRODUCE AND SELL IT THROUGHOUT THE
CIVILIZED WORLDS.

AAAH.

USERS THINK
LITTLE OF ITS
PROVENANCE.

THEY'RE TOO
THRILLED BY
THE MOST
POWERFUL
APHRODISIAC
NARCOTIC
EVER KNOWN
TO CARE.

HE'S
DONE. CYCLE HIM,
MOURNA.

UHHHH.

BUT
HE ISN'T
DEAD!



TWELVE YEARS LATER, SHE USES
THE **CLAWS** SHE'S HAD FOR
TEN TO PUSH BACK TANGLED HAIR.



THE ACT IS APPRECIATED
BY A FELLOW SLAVE...



...A MOMENT OF
BEAUTY IN A
HIDEOUS WORLD.

IT CONFIRMS TO THE ROBED
MAN THAT HERE IS **MOURNA**,
THE WOMAN HE SEEKS.



WHAT REMAINS
IS HOW TO GET
HER OUT.

HE REVIEWS
SEVERAL
PLANS.





THEY ARE ALL
SUDDENLY
MUT.



JUPITER'S TIDAL
PULL WREAKS
ANOTHER OF
THE MINE'S
ALMOST WEEKLY
CAVE-INS.



RUBBLE FALLS.
DUST BILLOWS.
CARTS OVERTURN.



TO THE
SHELTER
HUTCH!
EVERY-
ONE!



BUT MOURNA FIRST SEEKS
TO AID A MINER PINNED,
BUT NOT CRUSHED.

LEAVE HIM!
YOU'RE WORTH TEN
OF HIM!



NERVE-FIRE
SENDS AGONY.

YOU'LL
DO AS I
SAY!



AGONY
BECOMES
RAGE.





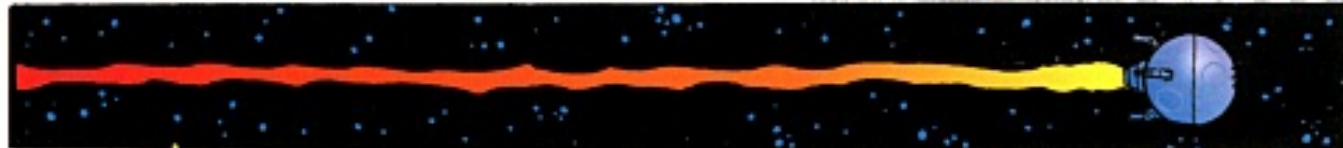
MY SHIP'S CLOSE.

WE CAN LEAVE.

I CAME FOR YOU, MOURNA.

WHO-- WHY?!





GALIOPOLIS,
CAPITAL CITY
OF MARS.



ROCCO TOWERS HOUSE
THE **SUPER-RICH**.



THEY ARE NEARLY
IMPREGNABLE.



NEARLY.

THE **FACELESS MAN**
HOORN SURVEYS THE
PENTHOUSE.

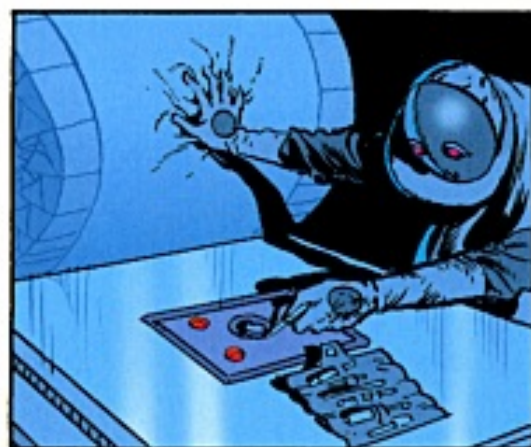


RICHES ARE HERE.

BUT WHERE?
A SCANNING
INTUITAB WEIGHS
PROBABILITIES.

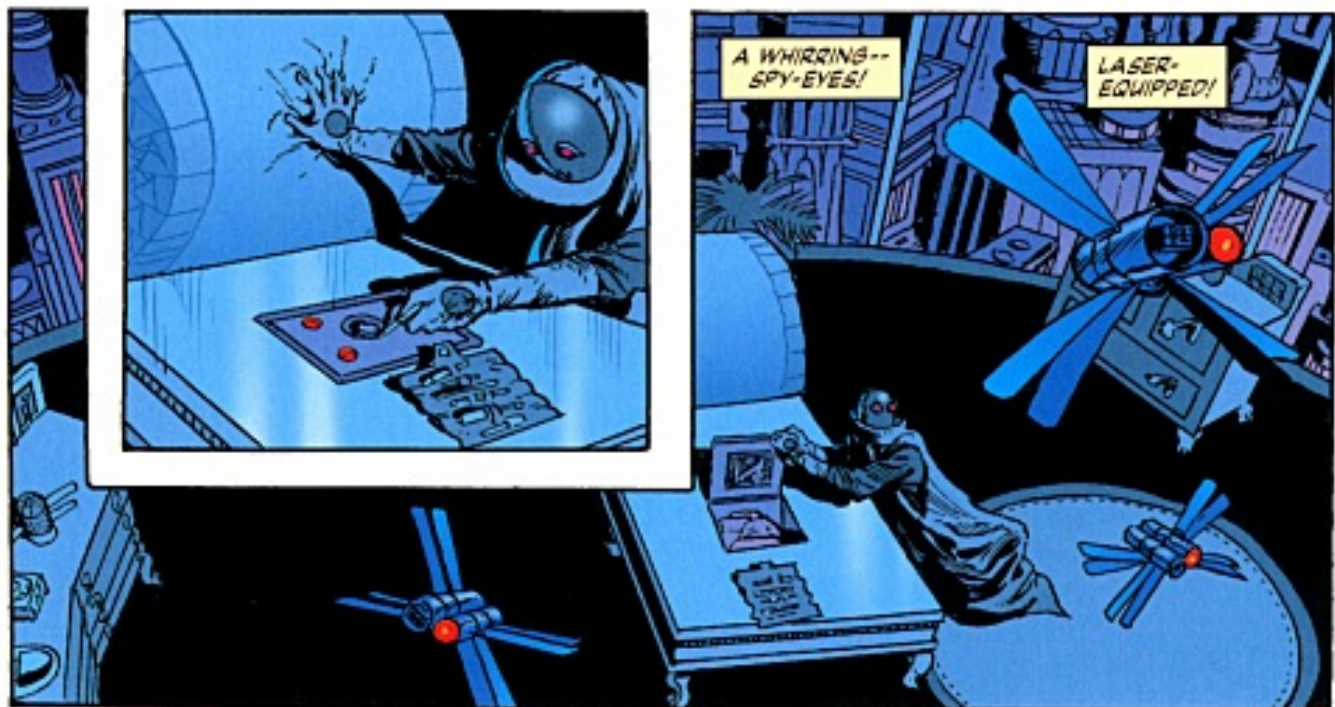


AH, THE BED.
TO WORK.



A WHIRRING--
SPY-EYES!

LASER-
EQUIPPED!



FLOWING CAPE AND UPSWEPT
MATTRESS DO NOT STOP THE
BEAMS, BUT THEY CONFOUND AIM.

HOORN RUSHES TO
THE BREACH IN THE
DIAMONDGLASS
UNBURNED.

HE DIVES TO
SAFETY...

...THOUGH IT SEEMS LIKE
CERTAIN DEATH.

HIS FLUTTER
NOZZLES
UNFOLD,
LOCK,
IGNITE.

HOORN JETS AWAY--
INTO THE PATH OF A
POLICE BOAT.

ITS BEAM
NEUTRALIZES
CIRCUITS.

HIS
JETS
DIE.

AND ALL HIS
ABILITY, ALL
HIS DEVICES,
CANNOT SAVE
THE FACE-
LESS MAN.



BUT ANOTHER
SKYBOAT SLIPS
THROUGH THE
ORNATE TOWERS.



I
HAVE
HIM!



WHO
ARE YOU
PEOPLE?



WE'RE THE
ONES SAVING YOU,
IF WE CAN GET OUT
OF PATROLLED AIR-
SPACE SOON.

MOURNA,
SEAL THE HATCH. IT'S
TIME TO PUSH THIS
BOAT HARD.

HOORN, I'M
COLLECTING ALLIES
TO FACE A CRISIS.
PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL
SKILLS.



YOU HEARD ABOUT
THE TROUBLE ON EARTH,
I TAKE IT?



YEAH,
SOMEBODY
KILLED THE
PRESIDENT, AND
THEY NUKED
NEW YORK
HARBOR
DRY.

BOTH
WRONG.



THE PRESIDENT
SPONTANEOUSLY COMBUSTED.
NEW YORK HARBOR TURNED INTO
DESERT ON ITS OWN, SUDDENLY;
THEN A HOVERBARGE'S REACTOR
BREACHED IN A CRASH AND
BLEW UP.



THIS
GUY FOR
REAL?

WELL, HE
SAVED ME FROM A
SLAVE'S DEATH, AND
YOU FROM BEING
PAVEMENT ART.

I'M
MOURNA.



PLEASED,
I GUESS.



AND YOU WANT
ME *WHY?* TO SNATCH
SOMETHIN'?

A FIFTH-
GEN COMPUTER
CHOSE YOU.

I'LL EXPLAIN
EVERYTHING IN
DUE TIME.

FIRST WE
MUST GET SAFELY
OFF-PLANET.

AND
THAT JUST
GOT HARDER.
LOOK AT MY
SCREEN.



CAN'T OUTHUN
SKYRIPS.

FORTUNATELY,
I'VE TAKEN MEASURES.
PUT ON BREATHERS.



I'M ACCLIMATED TO
MARTIAN AIR.

THIS
IS FOR
DUST.



NOW OUT OF THE CITY, THE
SKYRIP'S MAGBOMBS
ARE FIRED.



BUT IT IS NOT THEY,
BUT **PREBURIED
CHARGES...**

...THAT BLOW UP
**PLUMES OF
DUST** AROUND
A MARKED POINT.



THIS SHOULD
HIDE US **LONG
ENOUGH.**

HELP ME
FEEL FOR THE
LINE ON THE
GROUND.



HOW MUCH
FURTHER?

IT
SHOULD BE
HERE.

I DON'T
UNDERSTAND.



AHH. DISTANCES
ARE DECEIVING WHEN
ONE IS BLINDED.

QUICKLY,
GET IN.



**A GLASSING BEAM
OPENS A DUST
TUNNEL THAT WILL
COLLAPSE A STERN.**

THE SKYRIP CREW WILL
THINK THEY DIED IN THE
BOAT EXPLOSION.



IF LUCK
HOLDS.



WHY ARE WE
SLOWING?

I DON'T
WANT TO HIT
ROCKS.

THIS THING
CAN'T HANDLE
ROCKS BIGGER
THAN YOUR
FIST.

SORRY--
MY FIST.



FORGET IT.



THE SHIP IS THERE,
UNDISCOVERED.

MUCH OF MARS, EVEN
POST-TERRAFORMING,
IS STILL UNVISITED.





IT'S SO--BIG AND EMPTY
OUT THERE.

YEAH, I
NEED A CITY TO
FEEL RIGHT.

THEN YOU'LL
BE GLAD TO KNOW
WE'RE GOING TO ONE
OF THE MOST OVER-
CIVILIZED PLACES IN
THE SYSTEM.

WHERE'S
THAT?

A PLACE WHERE
RITUALS AND RITES ARE
EVERYTHING.

WHERE
THEY **DUEL**
FOR SOCIAL
RANK.

VENUS.



FIRST
TOUCH,
DUELISTS.

HIS ASCENDANCE,
DON ROCHE DI PLANTAGERITTI
OF HOUSE MAROON, DESIGNS TO TAKE
A CHALLENGE FROM LADY AYLEEN
VALIANTE, NOVA MULIERE.

SHE'S A
PHOENIX,
I HEAR.

PLANTI CAN
MAKE HER **BURN,**
THEN.

IT IS LADY AYLEEN'S ENTRY INTO ELITE SOCIETY, IF SHE CAN **DISARM** THE DON.

NO EASY TASK.



VETERAN OF THIRTY MATCHES--THOUGH SURGERIES AND **NANOMENDS** HAVE ERASED THEIR MARKS--HE KNOWS ALL THE GAMBITS.

AND HE **RESENTS** THIS UPSTART. THEY ALL DO.



ENGAGE!

GZILLIT!!

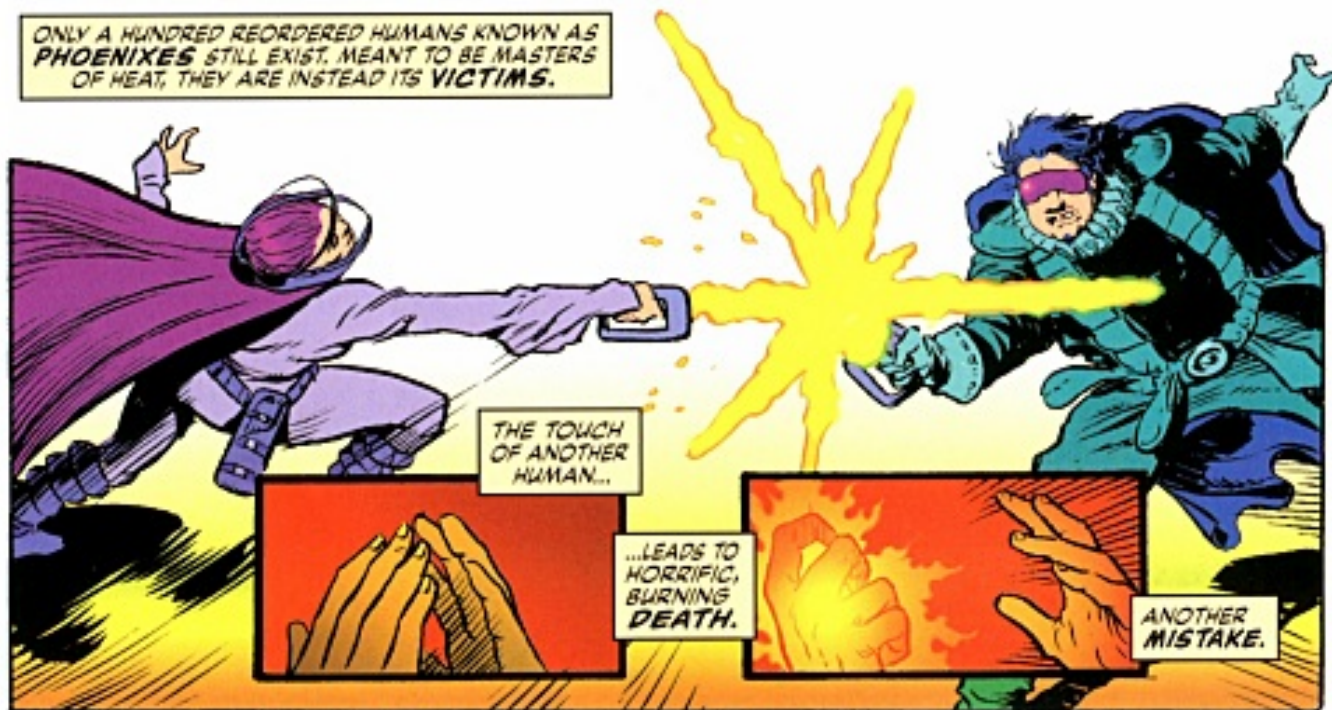


SHE'S FAST.

PHOENIXES HAVE TO BE.



ONLY A HUNDRED REORDERED HUMANS KNOWN AS **PHOENIXES** STILL EXIST. MEANT TO BE MASTERS OF HEAT, THEY ARE INSTEAD ITS **VICTIMS**.



THE TOUCH OF ANOTHER HUMAN...

...LEADS TO HORRIFIC, BURNING DEATH.

ANOTHER MISTAKE.



AYLEEN WILL FALTER, THEN BE RUN THROUGH--CONSIDERED EXCESSIVE PLAY, BUT NOT A LASTING STIGMA IF THE DEAD DUELIST IS UNPOPULAR.

AS SHE IS.





ALL PRESENT UNDERSTAND...

...NO DUE PROCESS IS IN STORE FOR THIS PHOENIX...

...ONLY FLAMING DEATH.

STAY BACK!



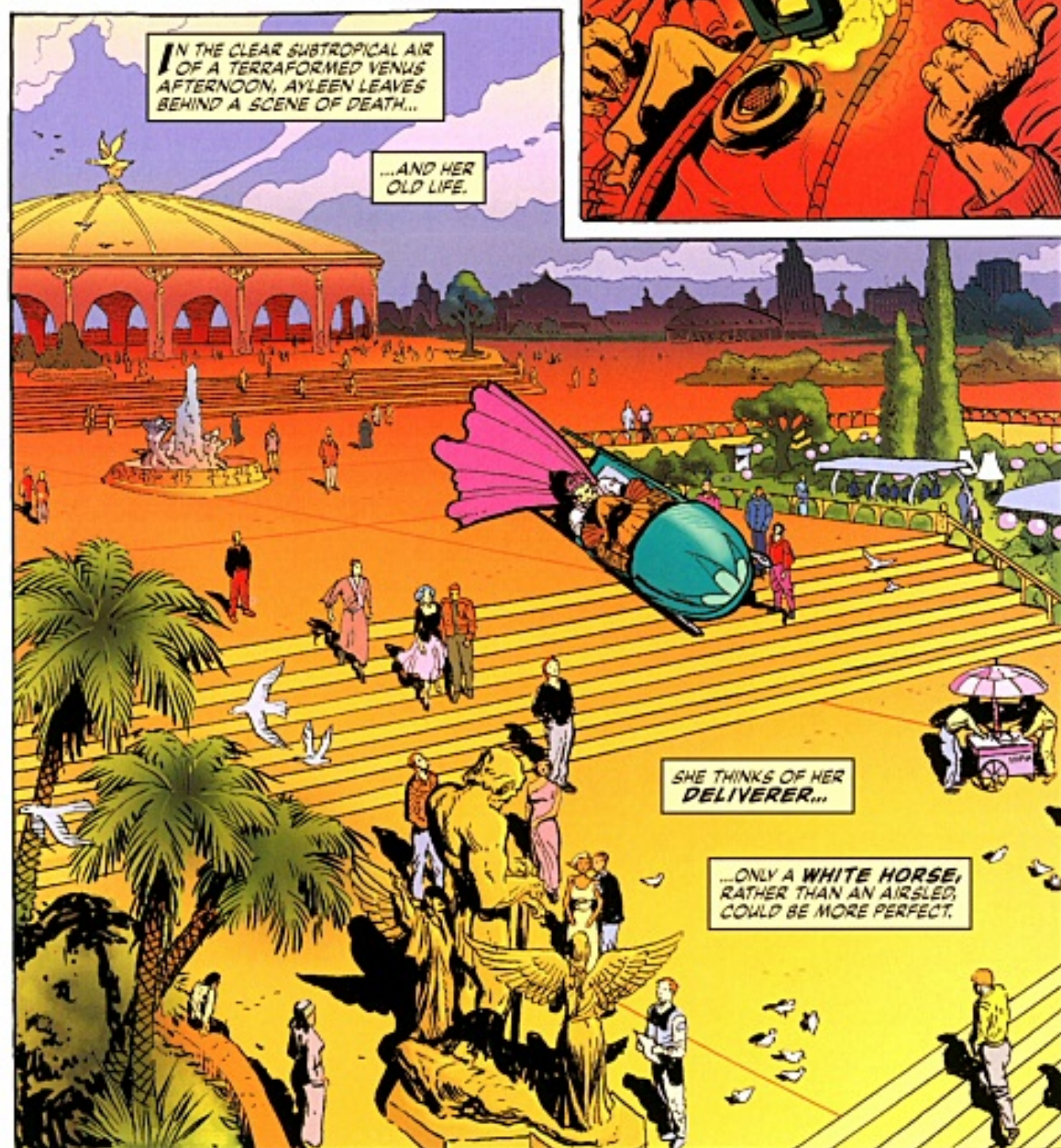


UNFORTUNATELY, LADY AYLEEN'S WOULD-BE **RESCUER** IS UNFAMILIAR WITH HOW **VULNERABLE** A PHOENIX CAN BE.















TITAN,
THE
LARGEST
MOON OF
SATURN.

HERE STANDS THE **PLEASURE
PALACE**, THE FILTHY "SPA"
WHERE ROUGH FRONTIERSMEN
GATHER TO DRINK, DOPE, WENCH
AND **GAMBLE**.

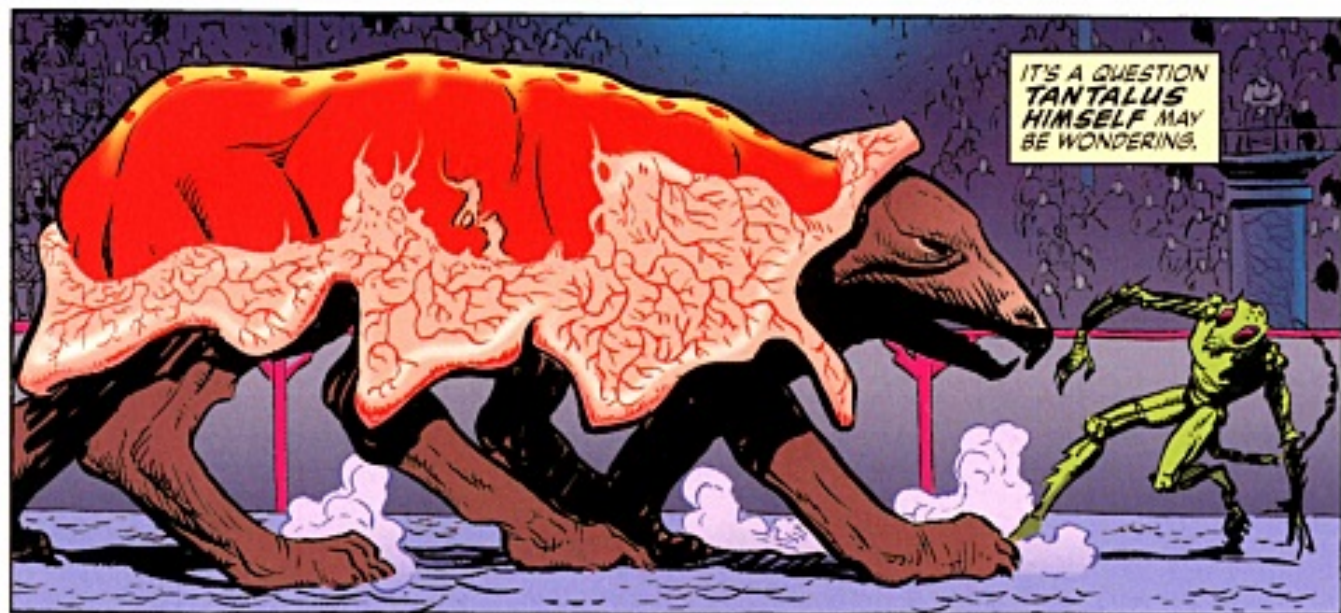
THIS NIGHT THEY
WAGER ON A
CONTEST.

A REORDERED MAN
WHO RESEMBLES AN
INSECT...



...FIGHTS A MOLE
CREATURE OF
TITAN...

...MADE MAD WITH
PAIN BY BEING HALF-
PLAYED.





THE MOLE-THING
LUNGES, BUT
ROCK-CRUSHING
JAWS SNAP ON
EMPTY AIR.



THE INSECT-
MAN IS AGILE.



THE CROWD, MOSTLY INVESTED IN
THE GREAT BEAST, MURMURS
ITS FIRST DOUBTS LIKE A **HUGE,
STUPID ORGANISM.**

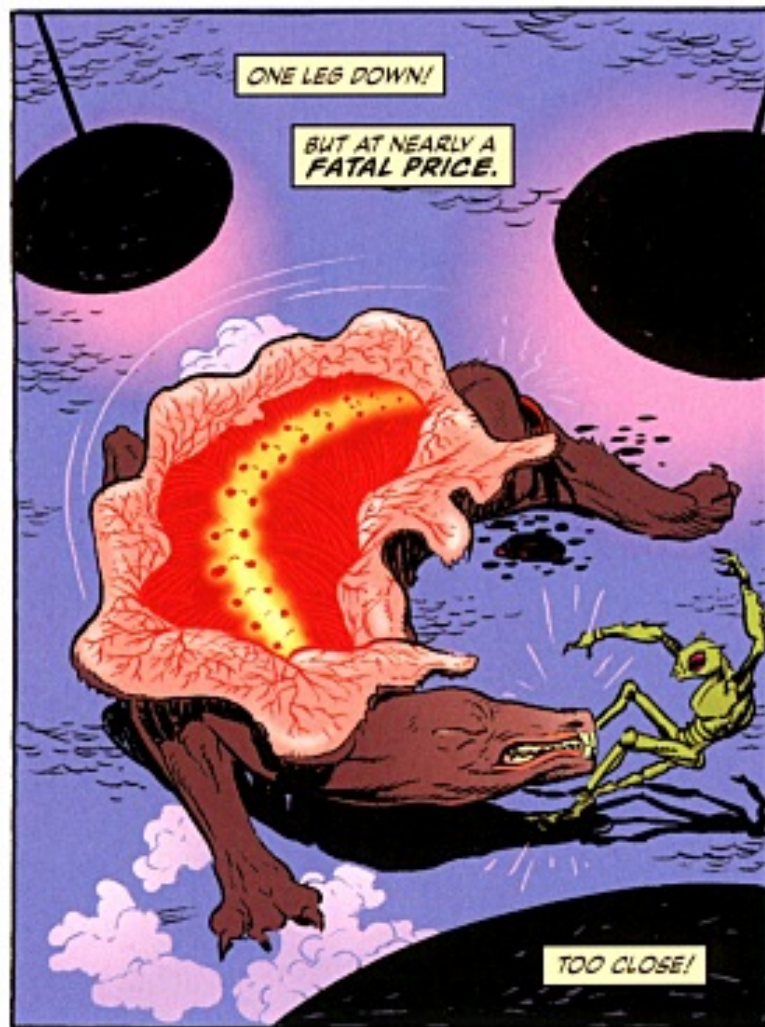
RURRRR!



**TANTALUS MULLS HIS
CHOICES. INFLECTING
MORE PAIN ON THE
TORTURED CREATURE
COULD HARDLY HELP.**



**BUT DISABLEMENT MIGHT! HIS
RAZORED FOREARM-CHITIN SEVERS
TENDONS AND VEINS.**



ONE LEG DOWN!

**BUT AT NEARLY A
FATAL PRICE.**

TOO CLOSE!

THE STATUESQUE WOMAN DRAWS SOME EYES, BUT THE STRANGE GROUP IS HARDLY OUTLANDISH IN THIS ROUGH CROWD OF NONCONFORMISTS.

THE ROBED MAN READIES HIS **BOLOS**; HOORN HIS REASSEMBLED GUN.



DAMN YOU, STAND STILL AND BE KILLED!

BLOODY COWARD!

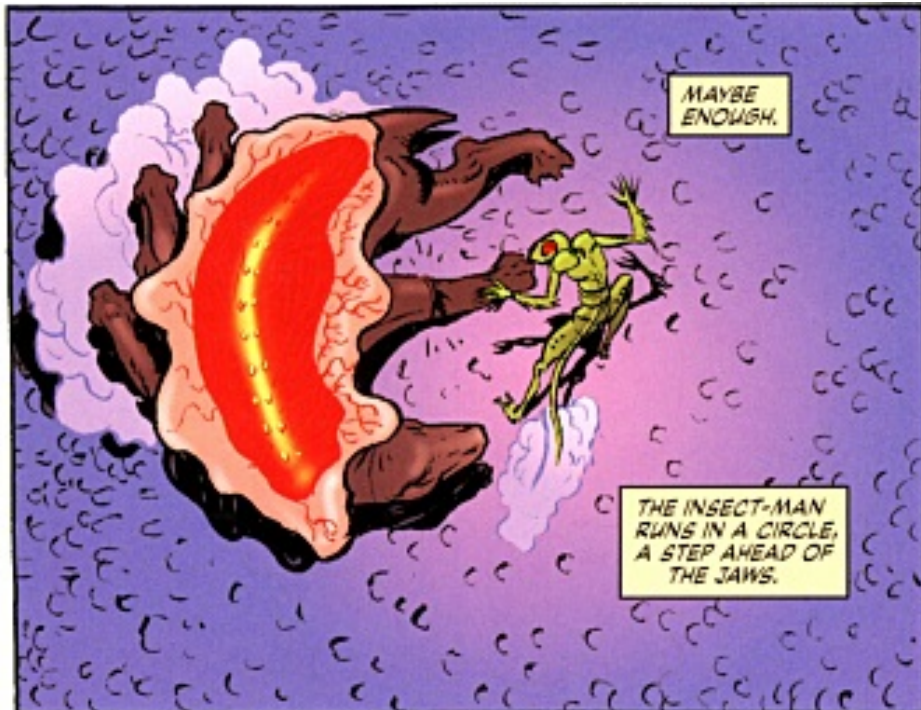


THE BEAST SNAPS CLOSER EACH TIME TANTALUS LEAPS.

IT'S LEARNING.

YOU'LL DIE, COCK-ROACH!









HOW CURIOUS, HOW WONDERFUL!

IT'S AS IF THE MAN WITH THE *SONIC BOLOS* KNEW TANTALUS COULD *CLOSE CHITINOUS PLATES* OVER HIS EARHOLES.

HOW CURIOUS, HOW WONDERFUL!

IT'S AS IF THE MAN WITH THE *SONIC BOLOS* KNEW TANTALUS COULD *CLOSE CHITINOUS PLATES* OVER HIS EARHOLES.

HE FOLLOWS
THE GROUP OUT.

NO ONE CARES
TO STOP THEM.

AYLEEN'S PRACTICE
HAS BORNE FIERY
FRUIT.

HE FOLLOWS
THE GROUP OUT.

NO ONE CARES
TO STOP THEM.

AYLEEN'S PRACTICE
HAS BORNE FIERY
FRUIT.

HE FOLLOWS
THE GROUP OUT.

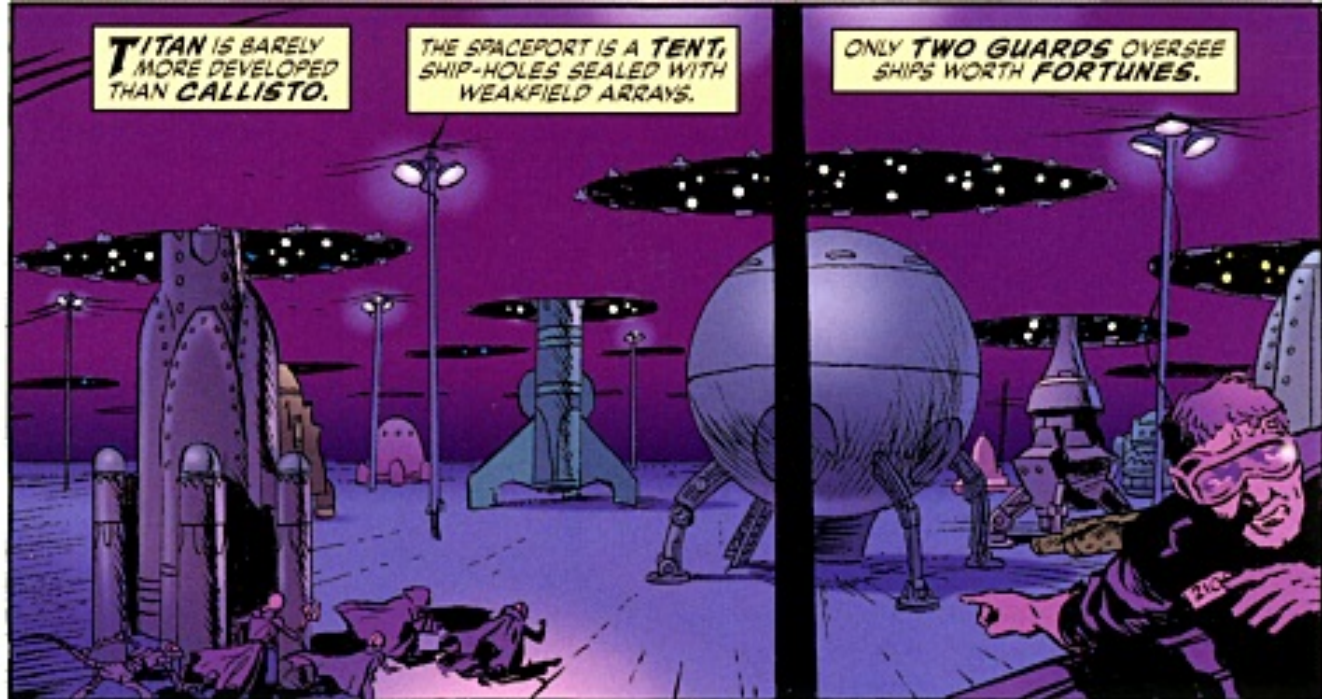
NO ONE CARES
TO STOP THEM.

AYLEEN'S PRACTICE
HAS BORNE FIERY
FRUIT.

TITAN IS BARELY
MORE DEVELOPED
THAN **CALLISTO**.

THE SPACEPORT IS A **TENT**,
SHIP-HOLES SEALED WITH
WEAKFIELD ARRAYS.

ONLY **TWO GUARDS** OVERSEE
SHIPS WORTH **FORTUNES**.



BUT THEY ARE
WELL ARMED.



A **NEAR MISS...**



...THROWS FRAGMENTS
OF **TITAN** INTO THE MAN
TAKING UP THE **REAR**.



"...THE MARTIAN
MOON *DEIMOS*."

IT'S HOT
AS HELL DOWN
HERE!



THAT'S
WHY WE USE
ROBOTS.

HE'S THE
XT-88.

A LLOYING ORDINARILY INCOMPATIBLE METALS IN
A NEAR-WEIGHTLESS CONDITIONS FUELED BY
DEIMOS'S MYSTERIOUS SEAMS OF COAL IS
A LUCRATIVE ENTERPRISE.



ROBOT,
STAND AND
REPORT.

URR,
SYSTEMS
STABLE,
HOUR 157.

ROBOT URR,
IF YOU HAVE SCRATCHED
THESE *DESIGNS* YOURSELF,
ACKNOWLEDGE AND
EXPLAIN.

YES. I MADE
BEAUTY TO PLEASE
MYSELF. I COPIED A
FOOD WRAPPER.

A GUARD'S
GLADBAR, IT
LOOKS LIKE.

THAT'S IT,
THEN. WIPE AND
REBOOT.

URR, BE
STILL.

THIS IS NO MERE XT-88. IT IS **THE RENEGADE**, ITS POSITRONIC BRAIN FLAWED TO ALLOW VOLITION AND **CREATIVE ACTION**.

A BOT-HUNT SPANNING **PLANETS** AND **MOONS** IS OVER IN A **SPRAY** OF **STYKTYTE**.



THAT'S THAT.

SAY, YOU DON'T THINK THE HEAT MIGHT...



CAUSE HARDENING? NOT SERIOUSLY.

HE'S WRONG.



OH, GOD.

AAAA!!




URR IS NOT CHIVALROUS. SHE BURNS UP INSTANTLY.

MARLENTA!

AAAAH!!


CODE NINE!






CODE NINE
PURSUIT
COMMENCES.

URR IS HUNTED
THROUGH DEIMOS'S
LABYRINTHINE
HALLS.




BUT HE HAS
A GOAL.



A HURLED CART
BUYS TIME.



A REMEMBERED
INTERSECTION
IS ACHIEVED BY
A HAIR.



PURSUERS MAKE
PREPARATIONS
TO BREACH AN
AIRLOCK.

URR PLANS TO HIDE ON
THE DEADLY SURFACE...

...UNTIL SOME SHIP
HE CAN STOW
AWAY UPON
LANDS.

A ROBOT HAS
PATIENCE...

...ALMOST AS
INFINITE AS
SPACE
ITSELF.

URR HAS
FELT THIS
WAY BEFORE...

...FREE IN THE
UNIVERSE.

HE SPREADS HIS ARMS, AS
IF TO EMBRACE LOOMING
MARS AND ALL THE STARS.

STYKTYTE BOTH HARDENS
TO **CRUST** AND BOILS TO
VAPOR IN THE VACUUM.



A HATCH
NOISELESSLY
OPENS.



URR IS LAUNCHED
INTO ORBIT.

URR RISES AS THE
DUST RAISED BY
THE BLAST EXPANDS.



HE MAY, FOR ALL HE KNOWS,
NEVER COME DOWN.



BUT WHAT IS TIME
TO A ROBOT?



46,400,184
MILLISECONDS
LATER...

...A ROCKET LINE
IS CAST.



HE IS DRAWN
TO HIS FATE.

HE RECALLS
WHEN OTHERS
ENSNARED
HIM.

DEAD
MEN,
NOW.









EARTH IS IN CRISIS, IN A WAY WE'VE NEVER SEEN.

INEXPLICABLE EVENTS: PEOPLE BURSTING INTO FIRE, TRANSFORMING INTO SNAKES, PARTS OF THE CRUST NOT JUST FAULT-SLIPPING BUT **TRADING POSITION**, CAUSING INCREDIBLE EARTH-QUAKES.



"IN ANTARCTICA, A MOUNTAIN OF ICE HAS FORMED, LARGER THAN THE MARS SUPERVOLCANO, **OLYMPUS MONS**."

"NO CLUE WHERE THE WATER CAME FROM--THOUGH WE SUSPECT **WHEN** IT CAME."




"THE NEW YORK HARBOR EXPLOSION? IT WAS PRECEDED BY AN INSTANTANEOUS TRANSFORMATION OF THE HARBOR INTO A **DESERT**."



"A HOVERBARGE DIDN'T ABORT LANDING IN TIME. ITS REACTOR BLEW."

"MANHATTAN IS GETTING A NANOSCRUBBING AS WE SPEAK."





"UNFORTUNATELY,
WE'RE BEHIND
SCHEDULE."

"KENRUS IS
ALREADY IN
TROUBLE AT
THIS POINT."

"I HOPE
WE'RE NOT
TOO LATE."

IN A PRIVATE SHIP,
SIX SPEED TO THE
ASTEROID CERES TO
SAVE A SEVENTH.

GATHERED BY THE **ROBED
MAN** WITH SCARRED HANDS,
FIVE MISFIT BEINGS HAVE ONLY
AN **INKLING** OF WHY HE
SAVED THEM.

BUT THEY KNOW THIS
SEVENTH IS THE MOST
CRUCIAL OF ALL.

URR, THE
RENEGADE
ROBOT...

MOURNA, THE SEVEN-
FOOT AMAZON WITH
CLAWS FOR HANDS...

TANTALUS, THE
INSECT-MAN...

AYLEEN, VENUSIAN
NOBLEWOMAN WITH
A FIRE PROBLEM...

HOORN, THE CAT
BURGLAR WHOSE
FACE MAY BE
GONE...

LET US
NOT BE TOO
LATE!



A SMALL, PYRAMIDAL SHIP DODGES MAGBOMBS AND SLICERS.



ODDLY, IT CAREENS TO THE SURFACE OF CERES.

DAMAGED?



IT IS NOW.



KEEP YOUR DISTANCE, ALL UNITS.

KENRUS HAS MORE WAYS TO BITE THAN A SIX-HEADED SNAKE.

LET'S MAKE SURE WE'VE KILLED THE OLD GNOME.



THE COMMANDER IS
A PROFESSIONAL.

EMPIRE IS AN
UNSENTIMENTAL
HUMAN VENTURE.

IT NEEDS
ENFORCERS.

SUIT
UP. PREP THE
RAFT.



IF THEY'VE REALLY BAGGED **KENRUS**,
THE BRILLIANT, DISGRACED, PARANOID
TECHNOLOGIST WHO MADLY CLAIMS
IT WAS HE WHO INVENTED **FIELD**
SUBSTANTIATION...

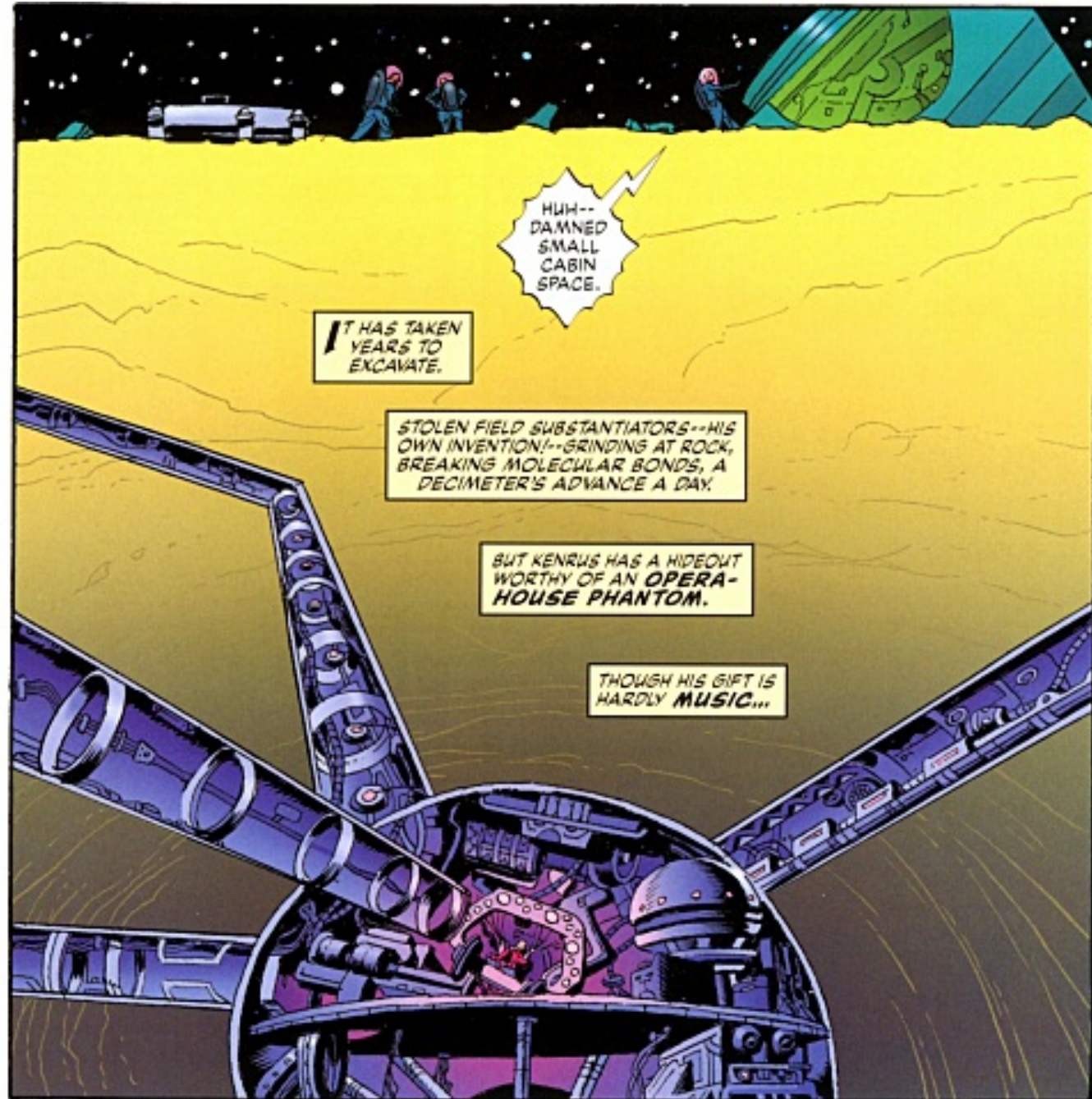


...GRATEFUL BUSINESS
SYNDICATES WILL SEE
THEY ARE **REWARDED.**

DUST THAT WILL TAKE
YEARS TO SETTLE
HANGS OVER THE
CRASH TRAIL.

HE'S
PROBABLY
DEAD. BUT
BE WARY.





HUH--
DAMNED
SMALL
CABIN
SPACE.

IT HAS TAKEN
YEARS TO
EXCAVATE.

STOLEN FIELD SUBSTANTIATORS--HIS
OWN INVENTION!--GRINDING AT ROCK,
BREAKING MOLECULAR BONDS, A
DECIMETER'S ADVANCE A DAY.

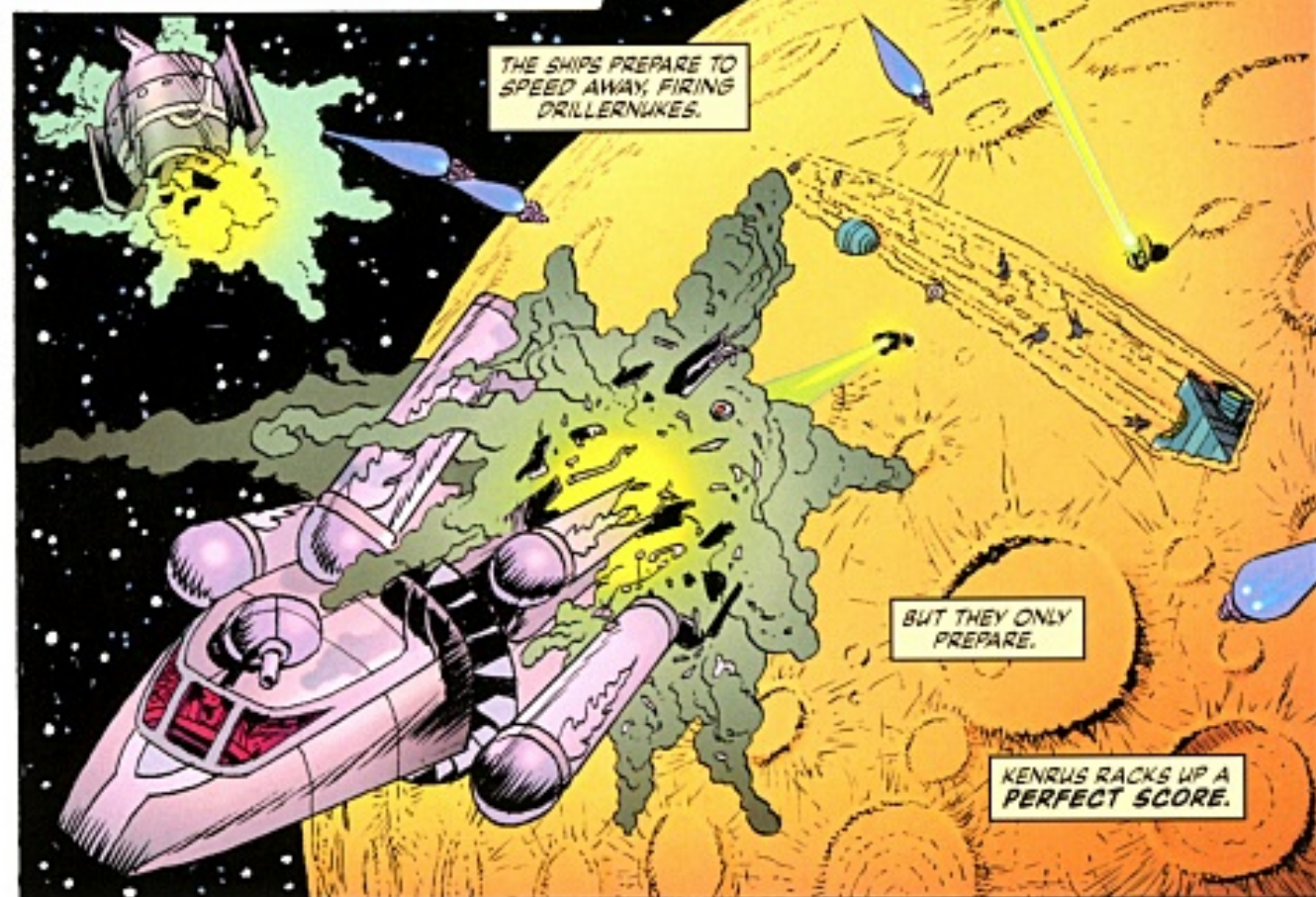
BUT KENRUS HAS A HIDEOUT
WORTHY OF AN *OPERA-
HOUSE PHANTOM*.

THOUGH HIS GIFT IS
HARDLY *MUSIC*...



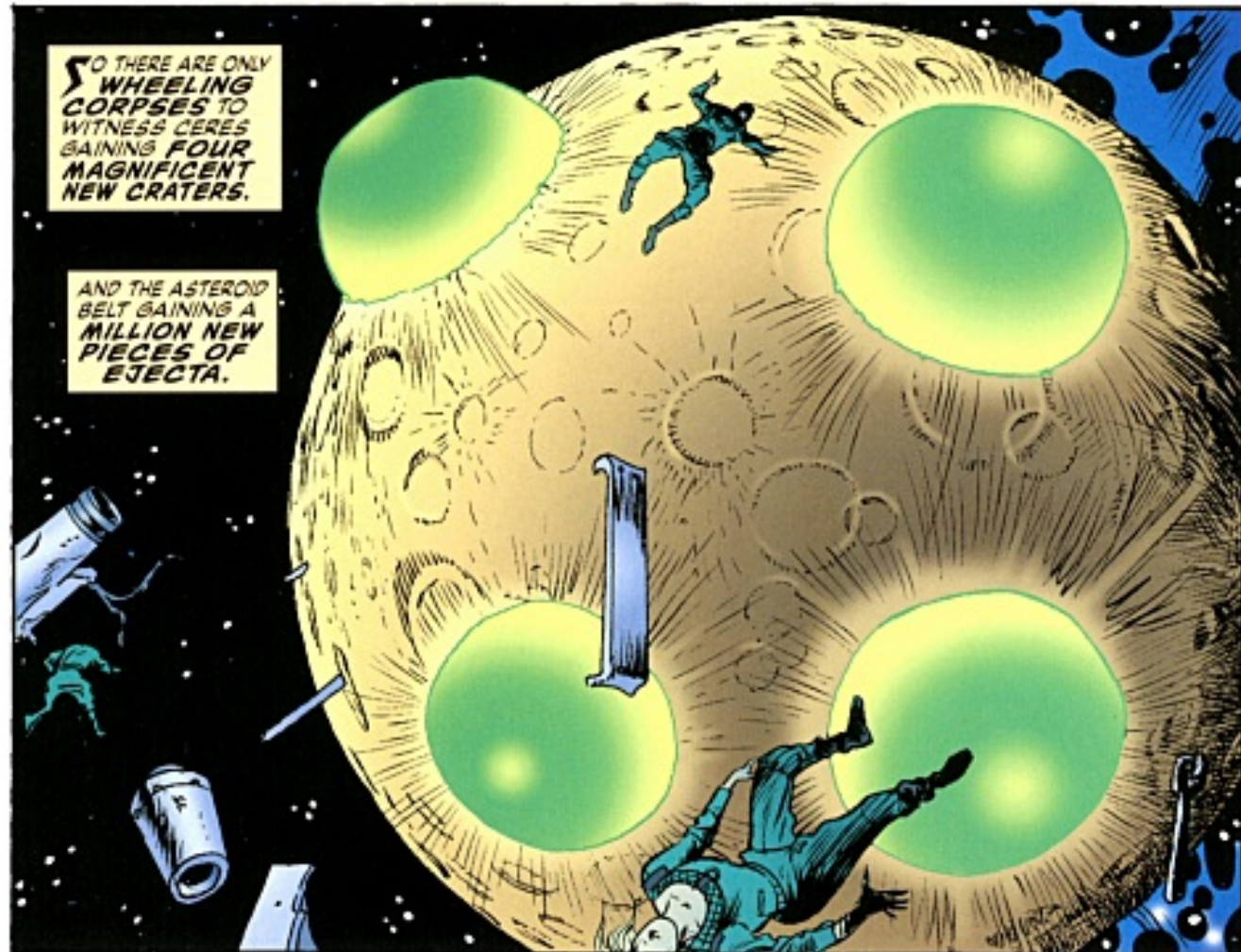
...IN THIS CASE,
IT'S MORE LIKE
PUPPETRY.

THAT'S
IT. A BIT CLOSER,
MY DEATH SQUAD
FRIENDS.



SO THERE ARE ONLY
WHEELING
CORPSES TO
WITNESS CERES
GAINING **FOUR**
MAGNIFICENT
NEW CRATERS.

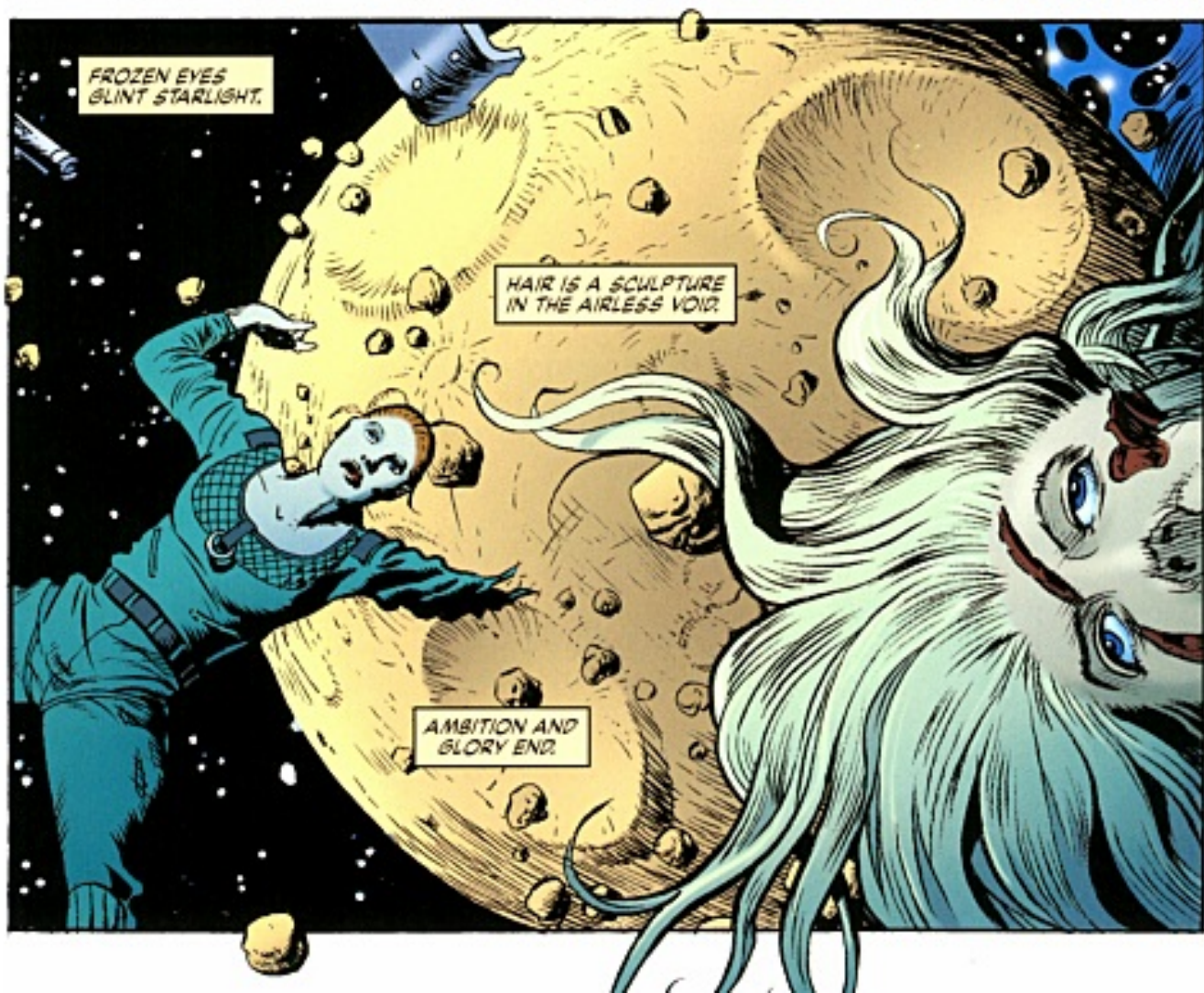
AND THE ASTEROID
BELT GAINING A
MILLION NEW
PIECES OF
EJECTA.



FROZEN EYES
GLINT STARLIGHT.

HAIR IS A SCULPTURE
IN THE AIRLESS VOID.

AMBITION AND
GLORY END.







BEACON DEPLOYED,
KENRUS WAITS.



HE HOPES THE FIRST
RESPONDER IS NOT
THE LAW.



I.V. NUTRIENTS AND HYDRATION,
CYCLED AND CLEANED, WILL
LAST **MONTHS**.



DOUBLE-BOUND
CRYSTALLIZED
OXYGEN--
LONGER.



A RETINAL
COMPUTER
INTERFACE
LETS HIM
CONTINUE
WORK.



IT IS ALMOST AN
ANNOYANCE
WHEN SOMEONE
COMES TO LEND
A HAND.

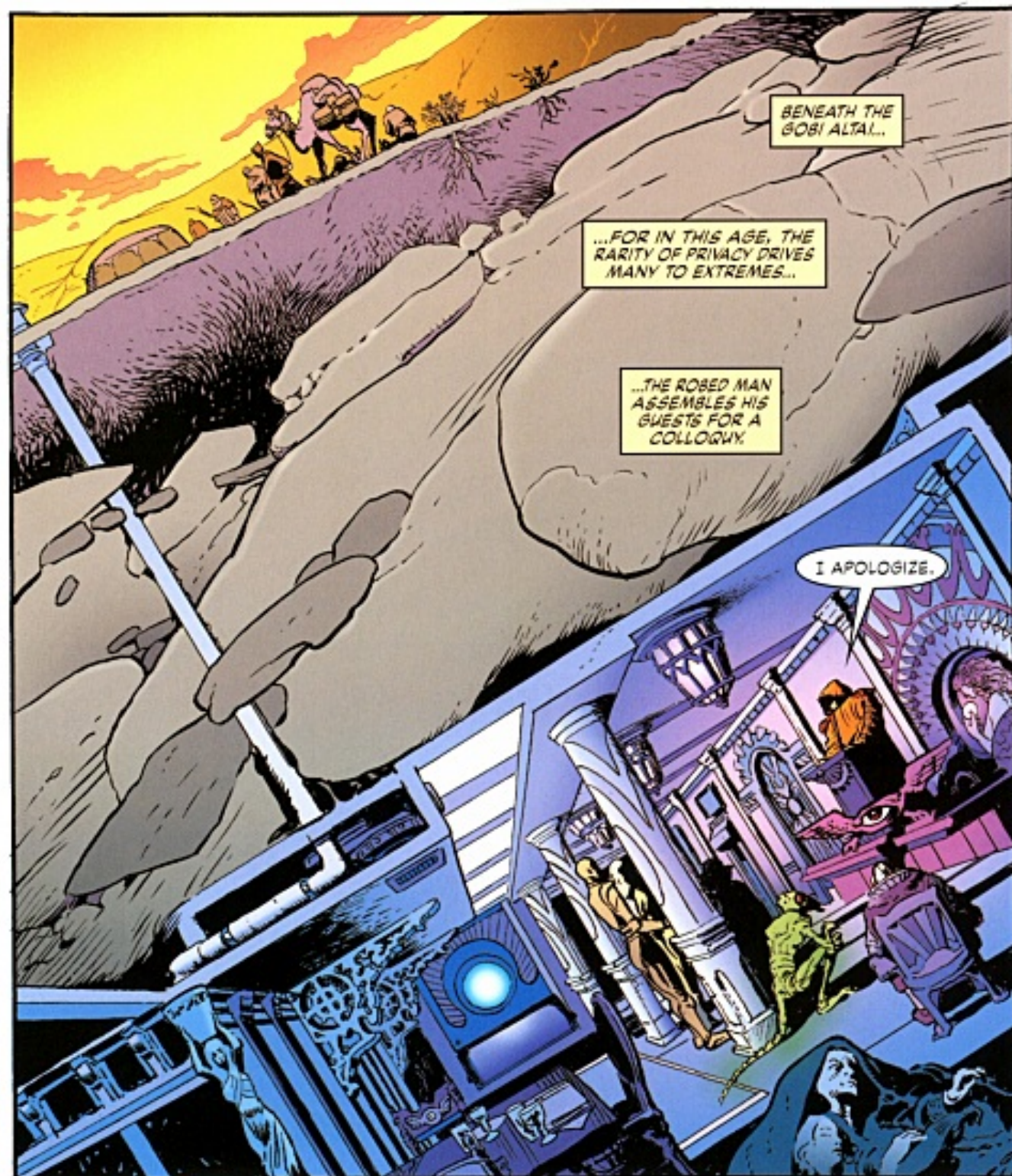
SO TO
SPEAK.

INTRODUCTIONS FOLLOW, FOR
ALL BUT THE ROBED MAN.

HE ASKS THAT IT WAIT
UNTIL THEIR NEXT STOP.



EARTH.



BENEATH THE
GOBI ALTAL...

...FOR IN THIS AGE, THE
RARIETY OF PRIVACY DRIVES
MANY TO EXTREMES...

...THE ROBED MAN
ASSEMBLES HIS
GUESTS FOR A
COLLOQUY.

I APOLOGIZE.



GERALD
PROKOSCH
ROARK...

...HERO OF
THE FOUR
WORLDS
WAR...

...COMMANDER OF
THE NIGHTLIGHT
LEGION...

...WHOSE GRASP OF
SPACE WAR
TACTICS MADE
HIM A FOLK
HERO...

...A PERSHING,
A MACARTHUR,
A LINDBERGH...

...AN AUDIE MURPHY, A
FRANÇOIS TOUSSAINT
LOUVERTURE...

...THE KIND OF MAN
WHO MUST SURELY
FALL FROM
GRACE.

FOR ROARK IT WAS HIS
POST-WAR ADVOCACY
FOR THE REORDERED.

THE REORDERED USED
TO COLONIZE ROUGH
NEW WORLDS...



THE REORDERED SLAVES
AND WORKERS IN DIRTY,
DANGEROUS JOBS...

...THE CANNON FODDER OF
THE FOUR WORLDS WAR...



...WHO HAD HELPED
ROARK WIN IT.



BUT NOT EVEN **HEROES** CAN
BE ALLOWED TO DISRUPT THE
ORDER OF THINGS.

A KANGAROO COURT
STRIPPED HIS HONORS...

...CONVICTED HIM OF
HUMILIATING MORAL
AND FINANCIAL CRIMES...



...EXILING HIM TO AN **ELBA-LIKE**
EXISTENCE ON HADES,
TWELFTH MOON OF JUPITER.

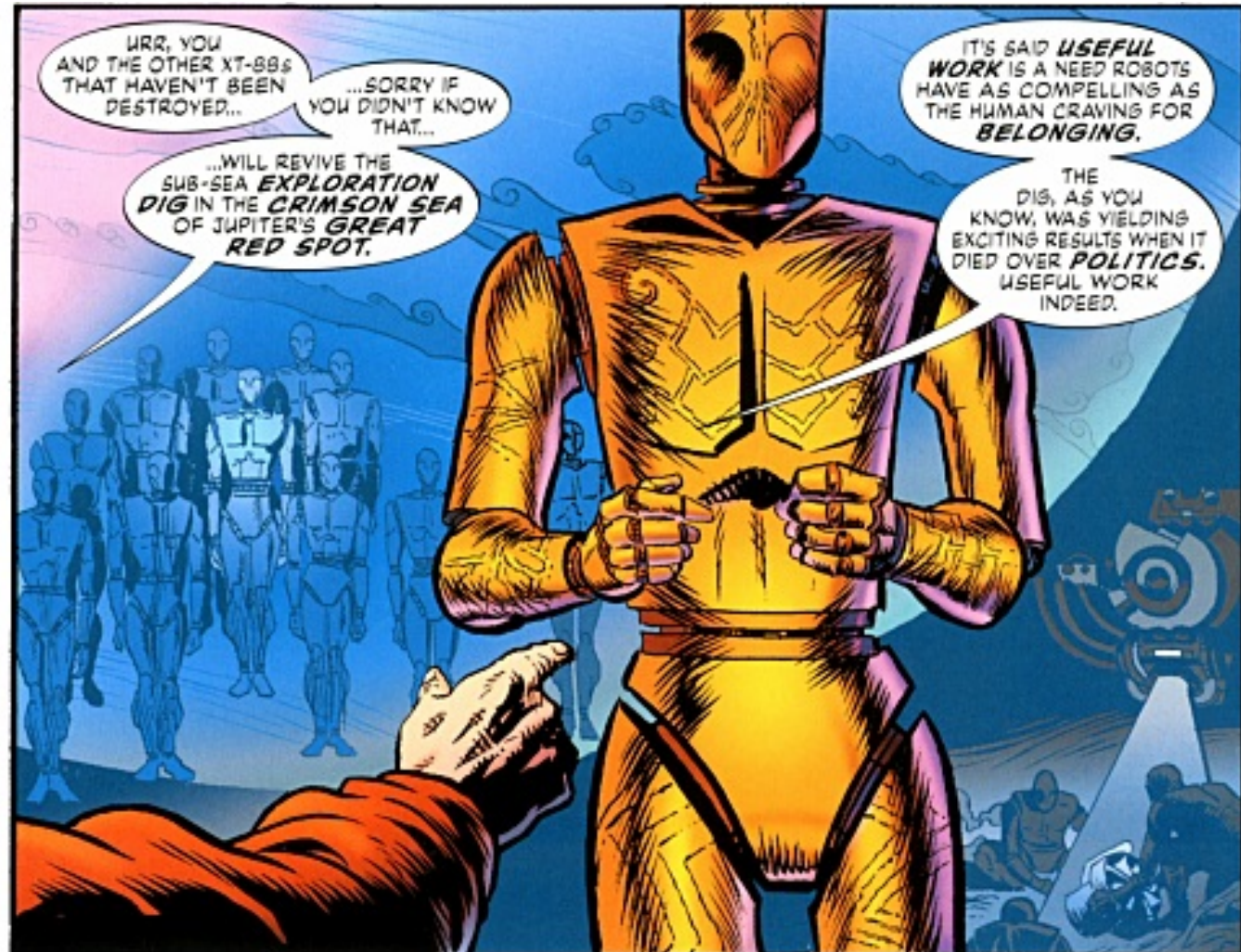
BUT **EARTH-CENTRAL**
HAD THE WISDOM TO KNOW HE
MIGHT ONE DAY BE **USEFUL.**











URR, YOU
AND THE OTHER XT-886
THAT HAVEN'T BEEN
DESTROYED...

...SORRY IF
YOU DIDN'T KNOW
THAT...

...WILL REVIVE THE
SUB-SEA **EXPLORATION**
DIG IN THE **CRIMSON SEA**
OF JUPITER'S **GREAT**
RED SPOT.

IT'S SAID **USEFUL**
WORK IS A NEED ROBOTS
HAVE AS COMPELLING AS
THE HUMAN CRAVING FOR
BELONGING.

THE
DIG, AS YOU
KNOW, WAS YIELDING
EXCITING RESULTS WHEN IT
DIED OVER **POLITICS.**
USEFUL WORK
INDEED.



LADY AYLEEN,
YOU ARE A SPECIAL CASE.
ELEVATION TO ROYALTY
CAN OCCUR...

IN THE FREE
VENUSIAN STATE OF
THE LAYEVILLE
ISLANDS.

OH YES, IT'S
A NATURE PRESERVE.
BUT THE LAST FEW
PHOENIXES WILL HAVE
REFUGE THERE TO LIVE
OUT DECENT
LIVES.

YOU, IF
YOU DESIRE, WILL
REPRESENT THEM TO
EARTH-CENTRAL, AS
DELEGATE FROM A
SOVEREIGN FREE
STATE.



KENRUS, YOU'VE BEEN WRONGED. THEY OUTRIGHT STOLE FIELD SUBSTANTIATION AND PAINTED YOU AS A **MADMAN**.

I'LL SHOW YOU A STATEMENT ACKNOWLEDGING YOUR DISCOVERY--AND PATENT REVENUES.

ALSO, YOU'LL GET A FULL-MEASURE VOICE IN EARTH-CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, EQUAL TO THE REORDERERS GUILD.

NOT TO MENTION A NEW, FULLY-EQUIPPED ASTEROID LAB, IF YOU WANT.



TANTALUS, THERE IS AN UNANNOUNCED, HABITABLE WORLD OFF BELLATRIX IN ORION.

IT'S YOURS, ALONG WITH YOUR FELLOW INSECT-REORDS, IF YOU WANT IT.

FOR YEARS, YOU'VE BEEN PUSHED FROM WORLD TO WORLD.

THIS IS A PLACE TO CALL HOME.





WE
FIGHT FOR
THE FABRIC
OF REALITY
ITSELF.



I'VE SPOKEN
OF THE FIFTH-GENERATION
COMPUTERS, MADE THEMSELVES
BY COMPUTERS **ALSO** MADE
BY COMPUTERS, AND
SO ON.

WE'VE NO
IDEA HOW THEY
WORK.

BUT THEY
PREDICT THE FUTURE,
INCOMPLETELY BUT
ACCURATELY.

HENCE, THE
CENTURY-LONG
ECONOMIC BOOM,
AMONG OTHER
THINGS.



ON THE BACKS
OF REORDERED SLAVE
LABOR, AMONG OTHER
THINGS.



"TOO TRUE, LADY AYLEEN,
BUT THE CRISIS COMPUTERS
ARE NOW SEEING INTO THE
DEEP PAST, AS WELL.

"AND THEY TELL US
THE PAST IS BEING
VANDALIZED.

"THE RIVER OF TIME IS
BEING **BIFURCATED.**"



"THE CHANGE IS NOT BAKED
IN, UNNOTICEABLE, AS LOGIC
MIGHT SUGGEST.

"THE SHIFT TO THE
NEW REALITY, THE
NEW HISTORY, IS
VIOLENT.



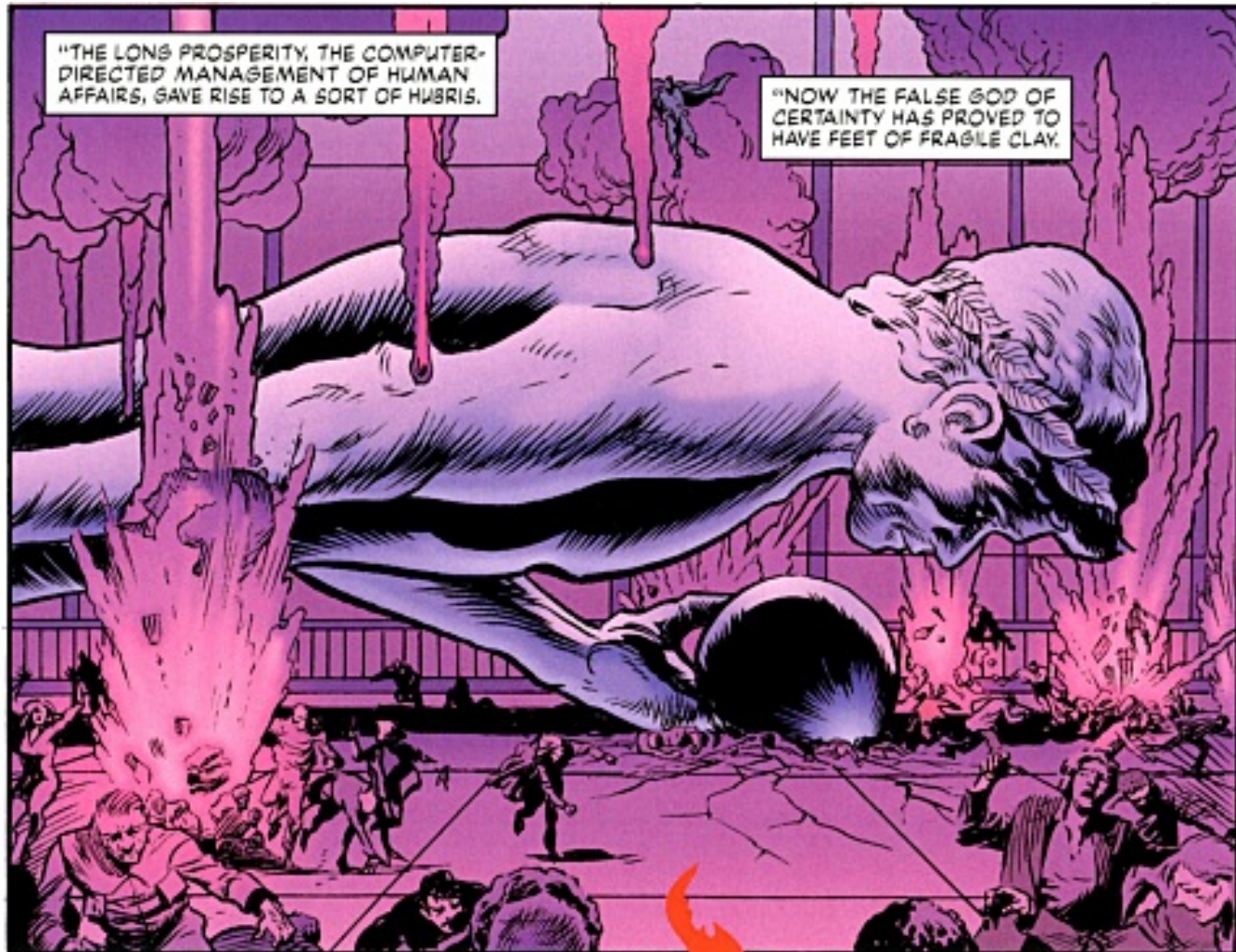
"THE DOMINOES
ARE FALLING..."

"...AND THE WORLD
TEETERS OVER AN
ABYSS."

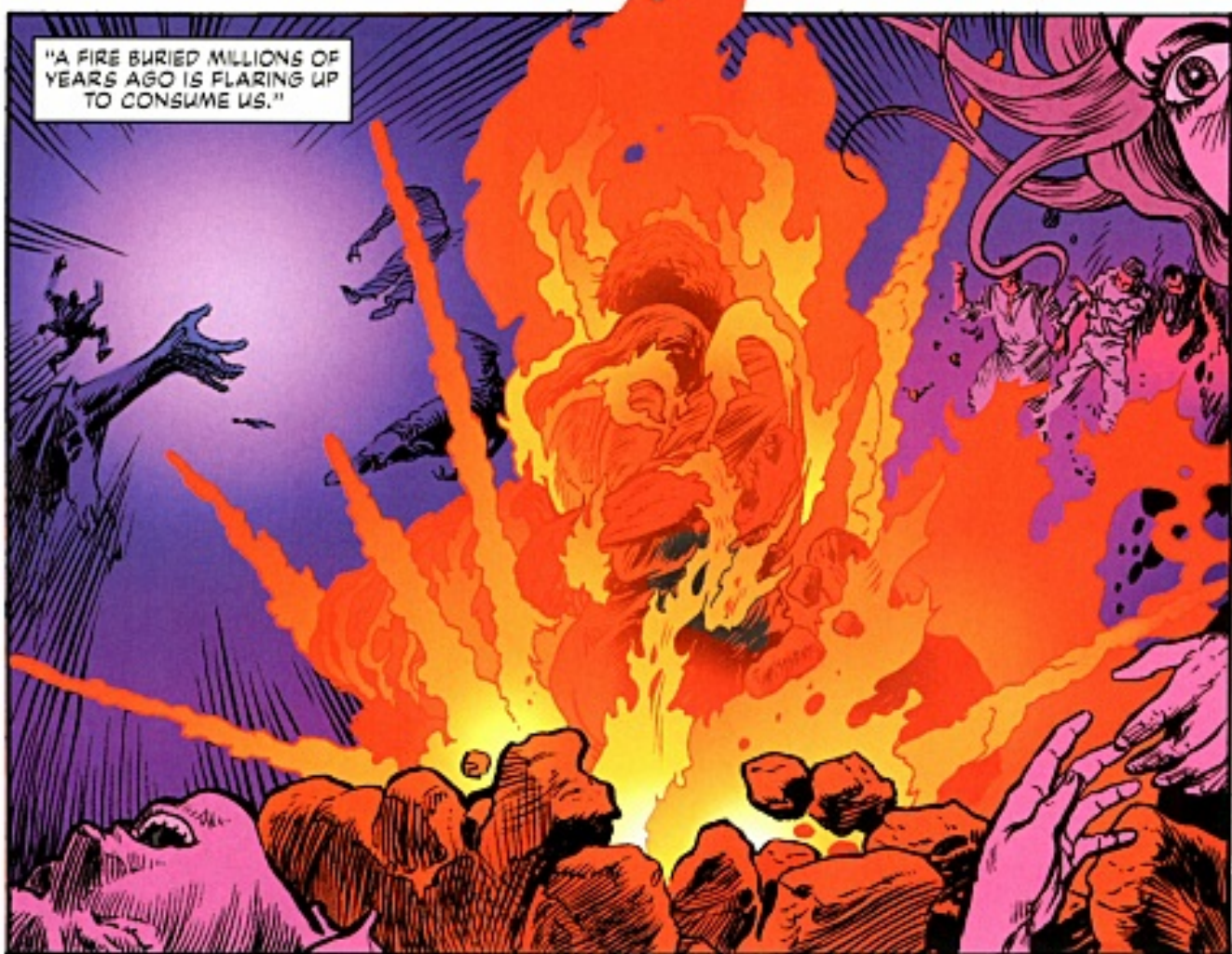


"THE LONG PROSPERITY, THE COMPUTER-DIRECTED MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN AFFAIRS, GAVE RISE TO A SORT OF HUBRIS.

"NOW THE FALSE GOD OF CERTAINTY HAS PROVED TO HAVE FEET OF FRAGILE CLAY.



"A FIRE BURIED MILLIONS OF YEARS AGO IS FLARING UP TO CONSUME US."

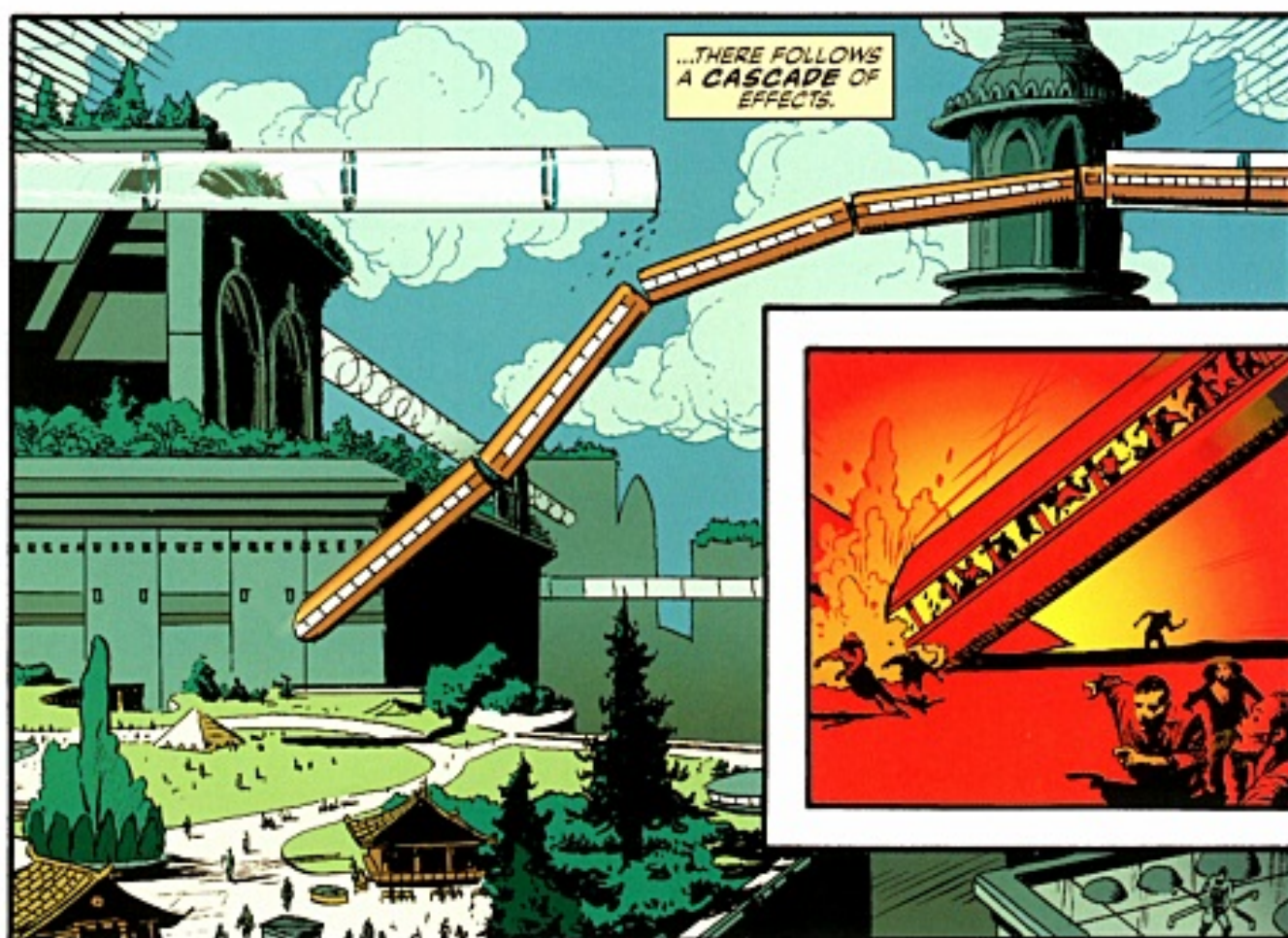




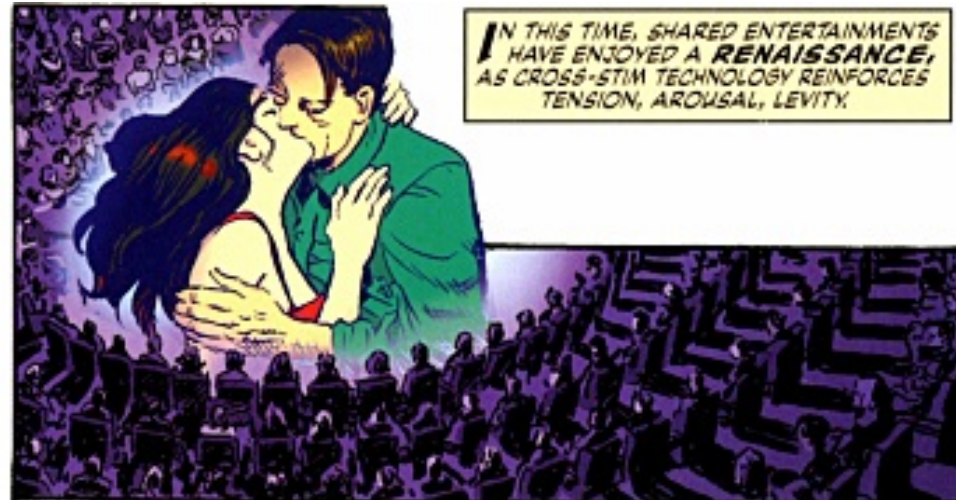




...AN ODD OMISSION...







IN THIS TIME, SHARED ENTERTAINMENTS
HAVE ENJOYED A **RENAISSANCE**,
AS CROSS-STIM TECHNOLOGY REINFORCES
TENSION, AROUSAL, LEVITY.



BUT AT THIS
SHOWING...



...HALF THE AUDIENCE IS SUDDENLY OF
AN **ELIZABETHAN** CHARACTER.

"SHAKESPEARE
SCHOLARS ARE
IN HEAVEN OVER
THESE POOR
DISPLACED SOULS."

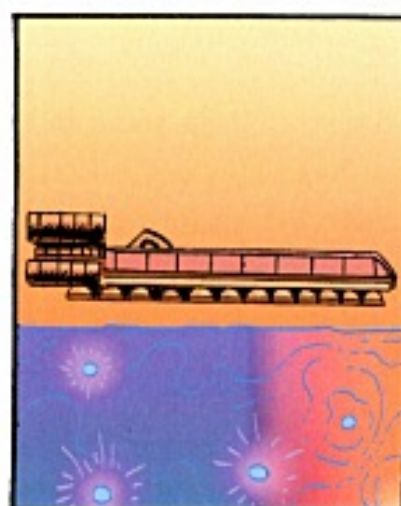
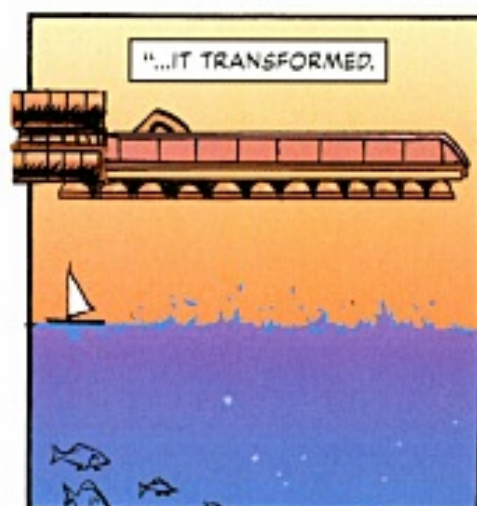
BY MY
THROTH, 'TIS
WONDROUS
STRANGE!

SOME EFFECTS
ARE FELT MORE
PRIVATELY.

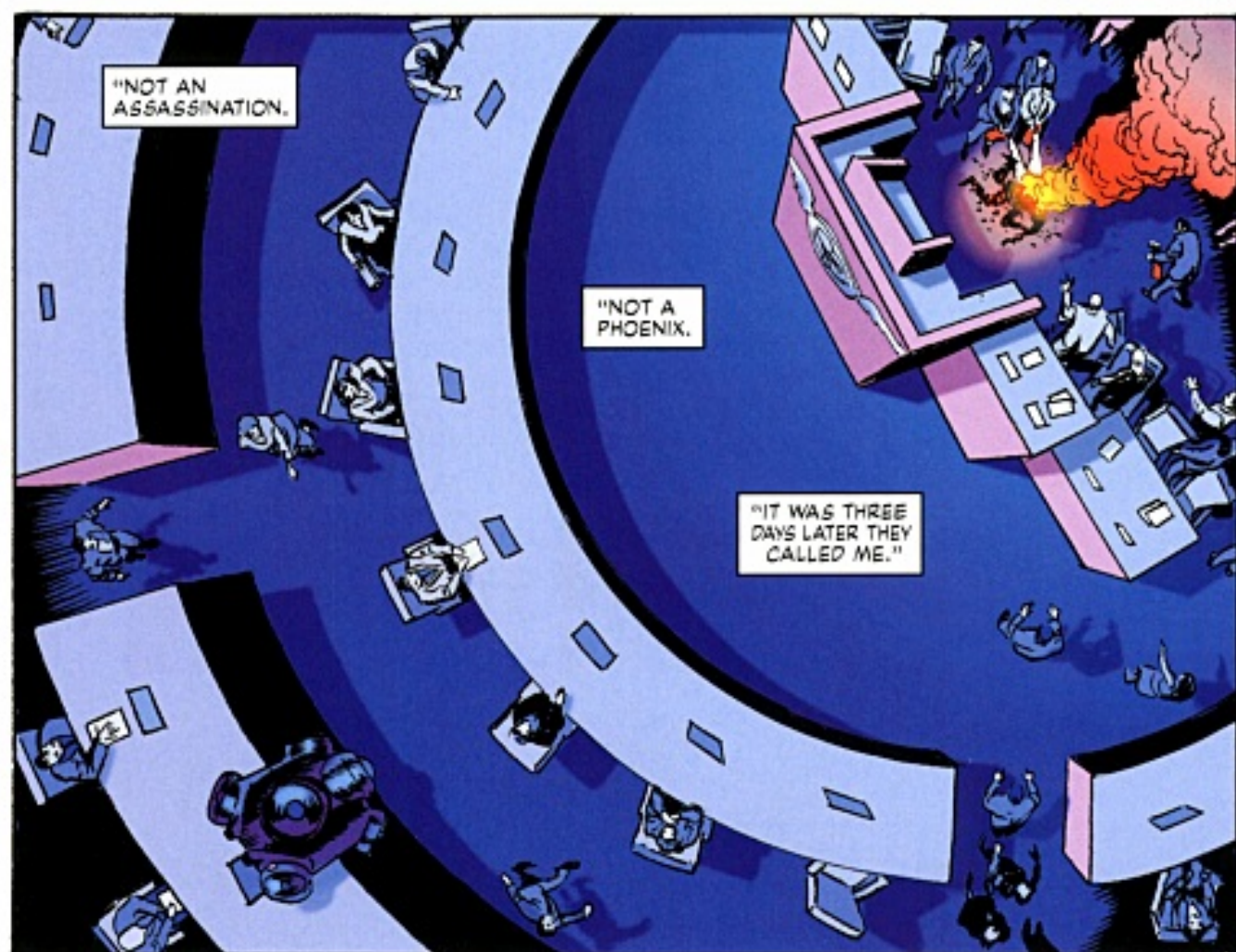
MMMM.

GIVE ME
A SEC TO WAKE
UP, HON.

YAAAAAHHHH!!







"A QUIET, BUT STRANGE
DEVELOPMENT IS IN
ANTARCTICA.



"THE NEW, LARGEST MOUNTAIN
IN THE WORLD, BIGGER THAN
OLYMPUS MONS ON MARS..."



"A VOLCANO?"

"NO."



"IT SEEMS TO
BE COMPLETELY
FORMED OF ICE."

"WITHIN ITS DEPTHS THERE HAS BEEN
DETECTED A **WOOLLY MAMMOTH**
AND ITS **HUMAN ATTACKER.**"



IF I MAY
JUMP IN, MR.
ROARK,

CHRONONAUTS, I
AM ABEL AVJU. THE TIME-
MIXING EFFECTS DESCRIBED
HAVE BEEN COLLATED AND
THEIR ORIGIN PERIODS
ESTIMATED BY THE CRISIS
COMPUTERS.

BY APPLYING
CERTAIN ALGORITHMS,
THE COMPUTERS
DETERMINE A POINT
IN TIME WHERE THE
MIXING SEEMS TO BE
ORIGINATING.

"CHRONONAUTS"--?

WE KNOW
WHEN, AND ROUGHLY
WHERE, OUR NEMESIS
OPERATES.

MR.
ROARK, BACK
TO YOU.





1,239,114
YEARS AGO--THE MID-
PLEISTOCENE.

THAT'S THE
TIME WE MUST REACH
TO CONFRONT THIS--
OPPONENT.

AND WE
THINK WE HAVE
A WAY.



LET ME GUESS.
IT INVOLVES HUGE
RISK AND UNPROVEN
METHODS.

CLOSE.

THIRTY-ONE
YEARS AGO WE FOUND
A ROBOTIZED SHIP BEYOND
NEPTUNE WHICH WAS PURPORTED
TO BE SENT FROM **NEXT
YEAR.**

THEY'RE
PREPPING IT TO
SEND IT BACK AT THE
RIGHT TIME AND
MAKE IT SO.

IT HAS FIELD
SUBSTANTIATION
TECH.

THAT'S HOW
IT SURVIVED GOING
THROUGH A **BLACK
HOLE.**



THERE'S
NO POWER SOURCE GREAT
ENOUGH TO THROW A FIELD
THAT STRONG!





THANK YOU
FOR THAT WARM
WELCOME.

IT'S
NOT LIKE *PAST*
RECEPTIONS.

BUT PAST
DIFFICULTIES AREN'T SO
IMPORTANT.

TODAY HUMANITY
IS UNITED--WE ALL WANT
TO SURVIVE, TO KEEP
THIS GOING.

SO TONIGHT
WE CELEBRATE. DRINK
UP, HONOR LIFE.



MY COLLEAGUE
KENRUS HAS CONCOCTED
A *SPECTACLE* WE PROMISE
WILL BE *MEMORABLE*.

AND
HOW.



THE BUBBLES
RISE, DEFTLY
CATASTROPHE, A
GESTURE AS
FRIVOLOUS AS
ICE CREAM.

**LAUGHTER
SPREADS.**

THEN THEY
SLOWLY
DESCEND...

BEAUTIFUL!

...AND
POP.

IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOW,
THE ARISTOCRATS LEARN
NOTHING REMOVES THE
ADHESIVE.

IT DRIES AND
CRUMBLES AWAY
BY ITSELF...

...IN A
MONTH
OR SO.



TO KENRUS,
MASTER OF THE
MEMORABLE
EXIT.

HEAR,
HEAR.



THE BEAUTY IS,
THE BEST THEY CAN
HOPE FOR IS WE'RE
KILLED **AFTER** WE
SUCCEED.

KENRUS, IS
THIS **BLACK HOLE
EXPRESS** GOING
TO WORK?



IT CAN. I WAS
BRIEFED IN DEPTH BY
AVJU, WHO KNOWS HIS
PHYSICS.

THE FIELD
SUBSTANTIATION WILL
LOCK IN EVERY MOLECULE
LIKE FLIES IN AMBER.

WE WON'T
BE CRUSHED, BUT
IT WILL STOP BLOOD
FLOW, NEURON
ACTIVITY, EVEN
ATOMIC DECAY...
UNTIL THE FIELD
COLLAPSES.



THAT WILL
BE CAUSED BY
THE ENTRY INTO
SUBSPACE.

WE WON'T
FEEL A THING
UNTIL THEN.

SO WHAT'S SUB-
SPACE LIKE? SOUNDS
CRAMPED.

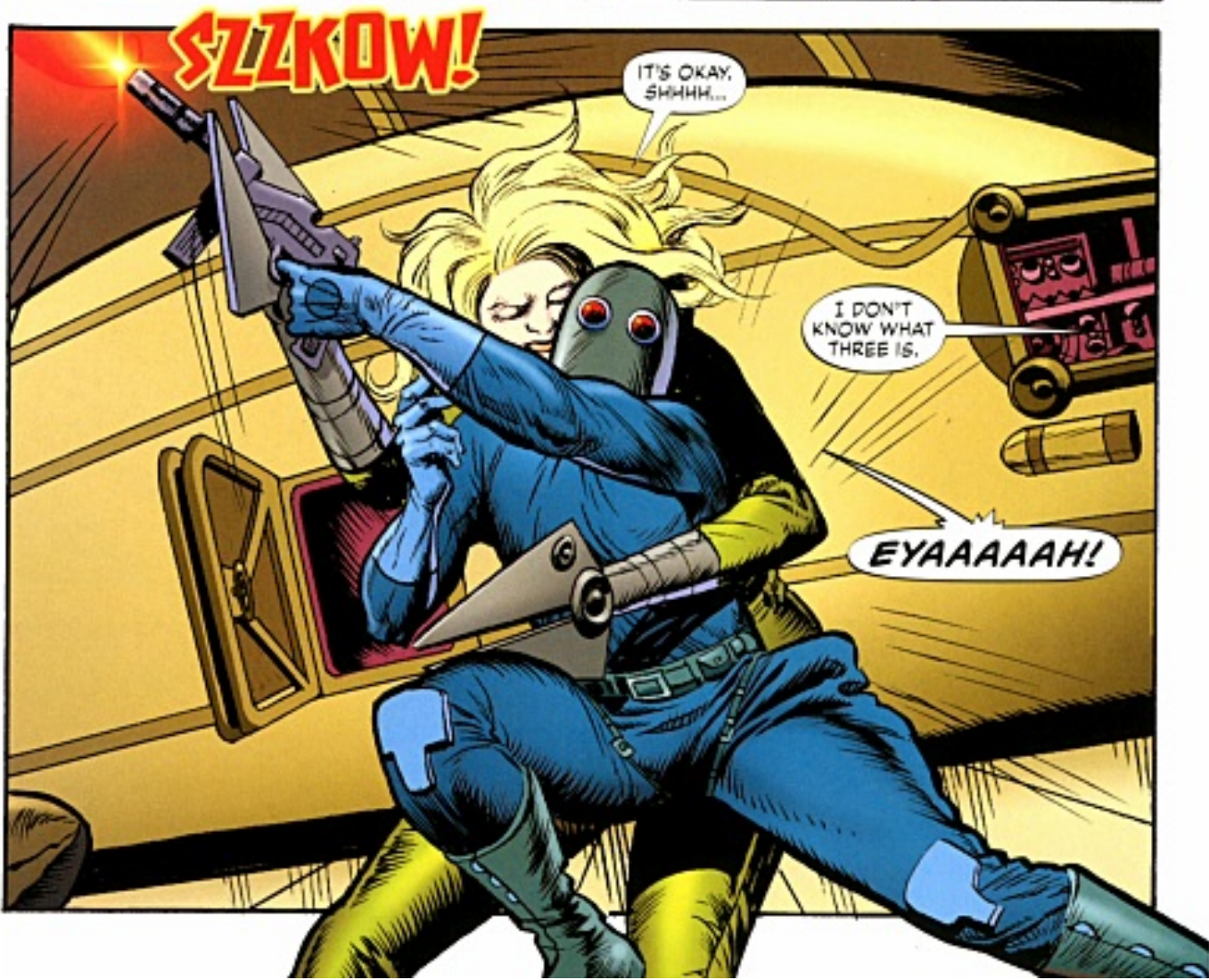


I'VE
READ IT'S
THE OPPOSITE,
THEY THINK,
EH?

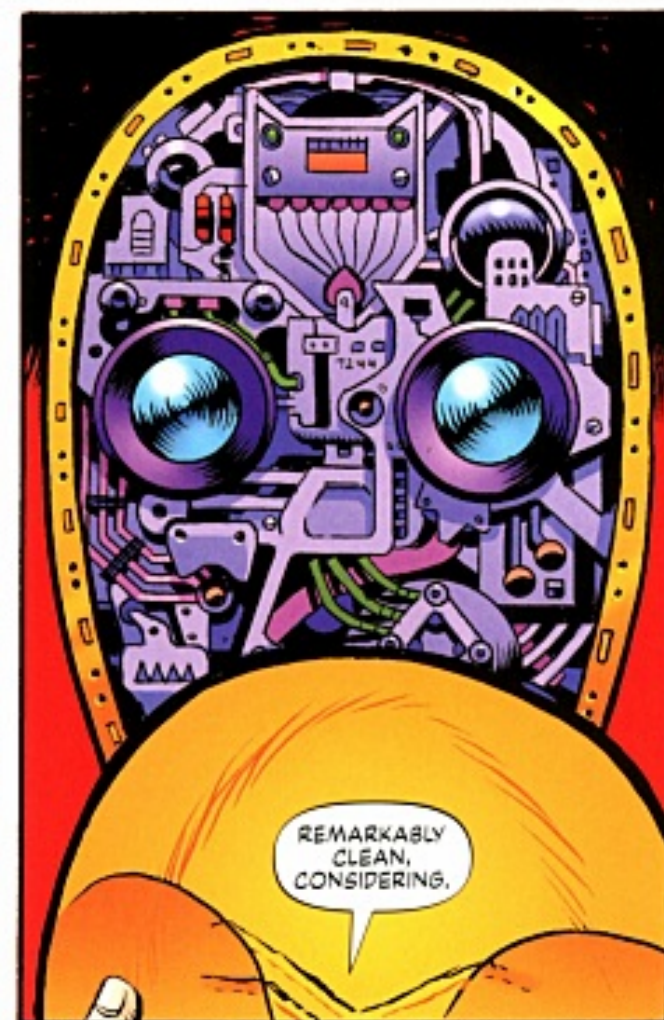
YOU'RE
BIG AS A
GALAXY.

THAT'S ONE
HYPOTHESIS. THAT SPACE IS
A **SUGGESTION**.











THE LAUGHTER'S
TOO LOW FOR
SUCH A FEEBLE
JOKE.

BUT THAT IT **OCCURS**
AT ALL IS A TRIBUTE
TO KENRUS'S BRILLIANCE.



FACING DEATH,
PEOPLE TRY
NEW THINGS.



THE FACELESS MAN FINDS
HIMSELF STARTLED BY THE
INTIMACY HE HAS ALLOWED.

TRUE, IT WAS DARK,

BUT STILL.

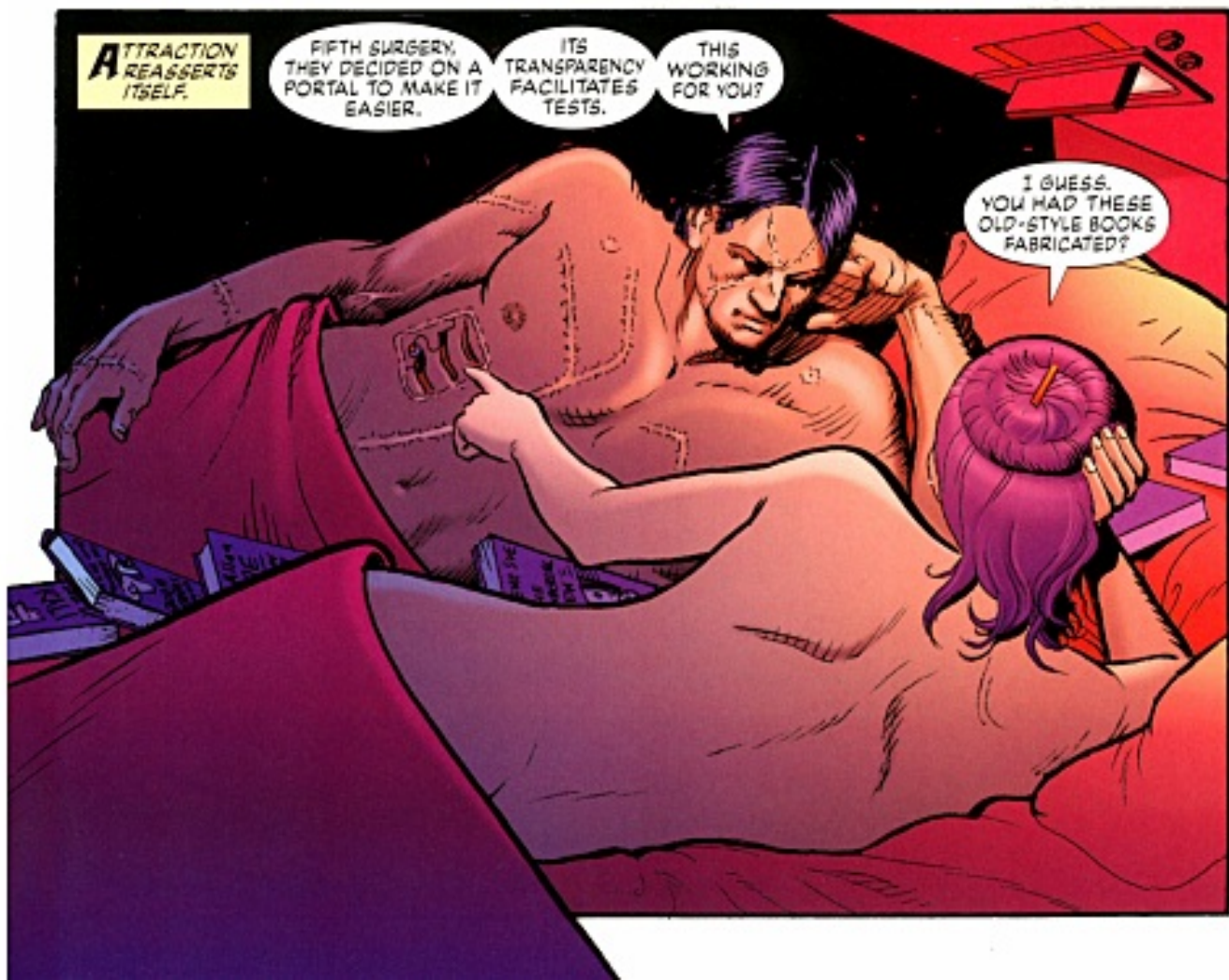
WITH THE STEALTH
HONED BY HIS PRO-
FESSION, HE DRESSES.

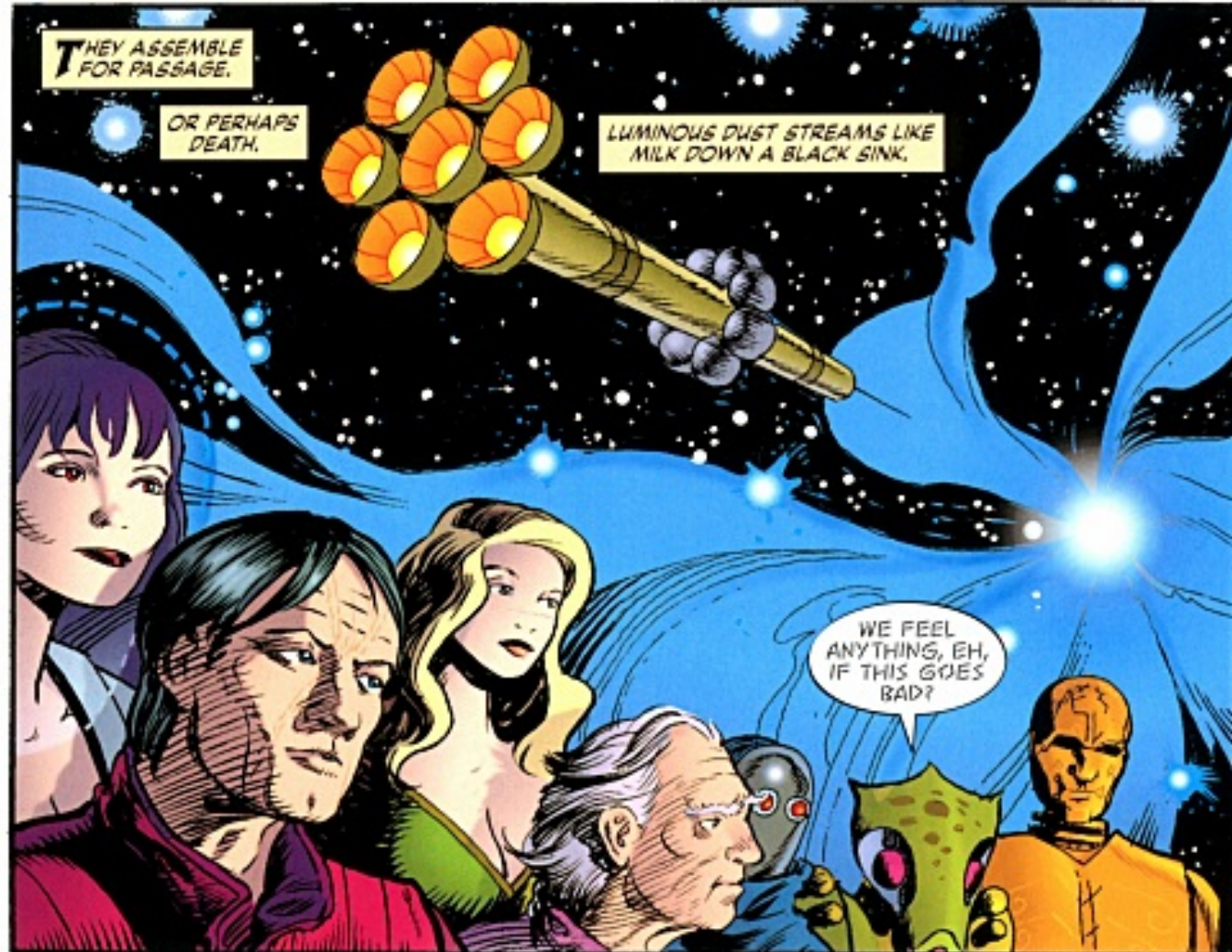


A MISTAKE.

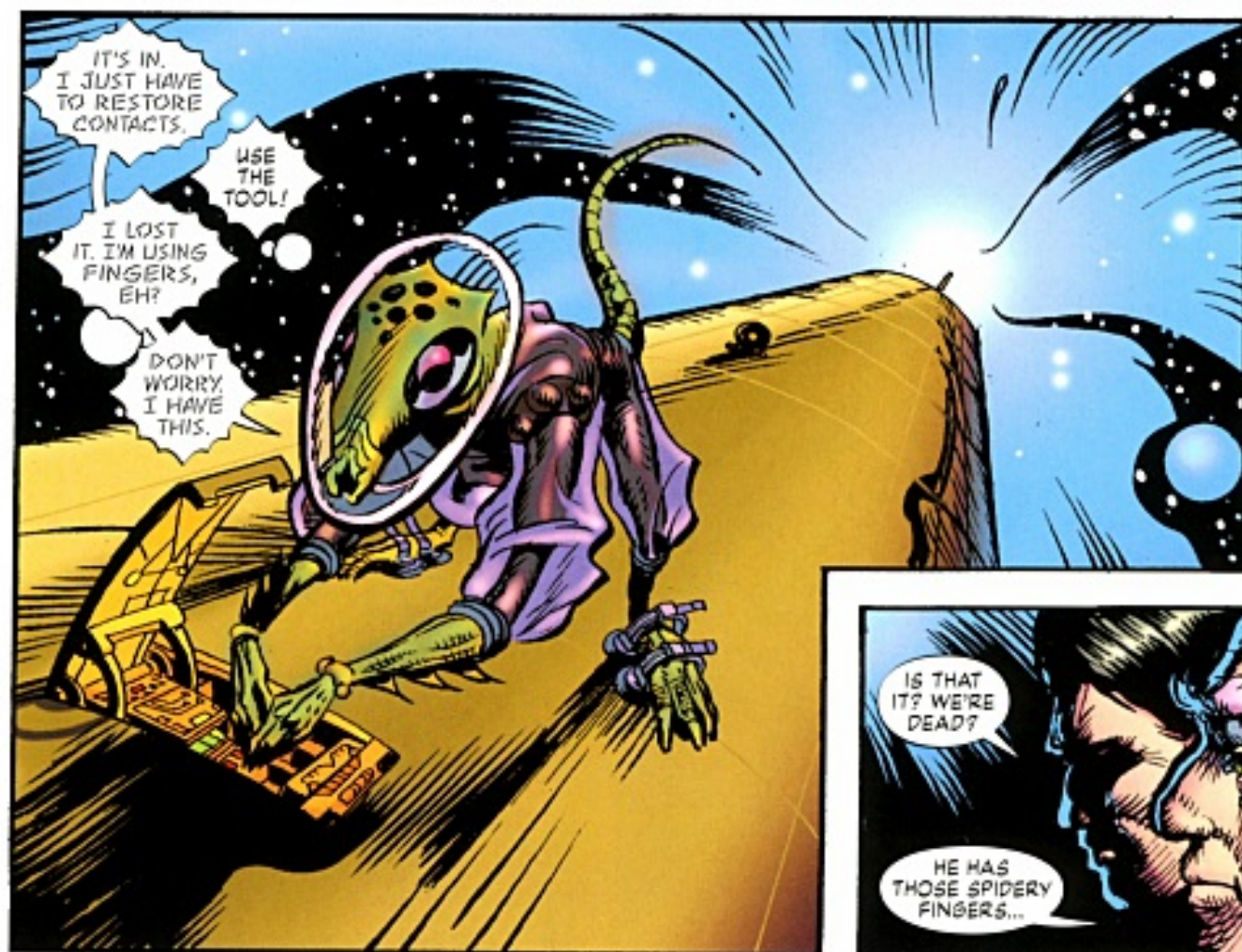
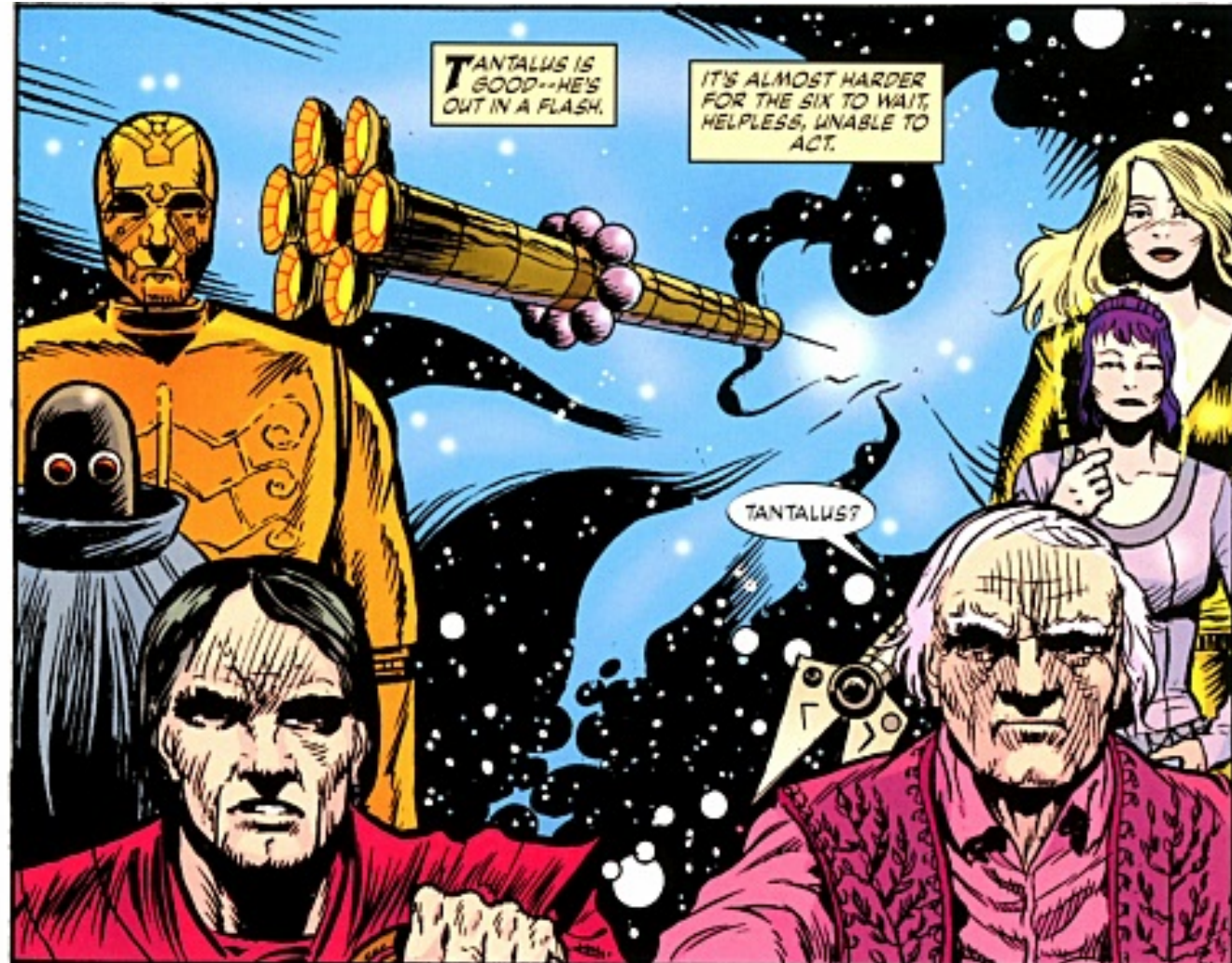


THAT FOR A TIME,
PERHAPS, HAS
SAVED HIS LIFE.

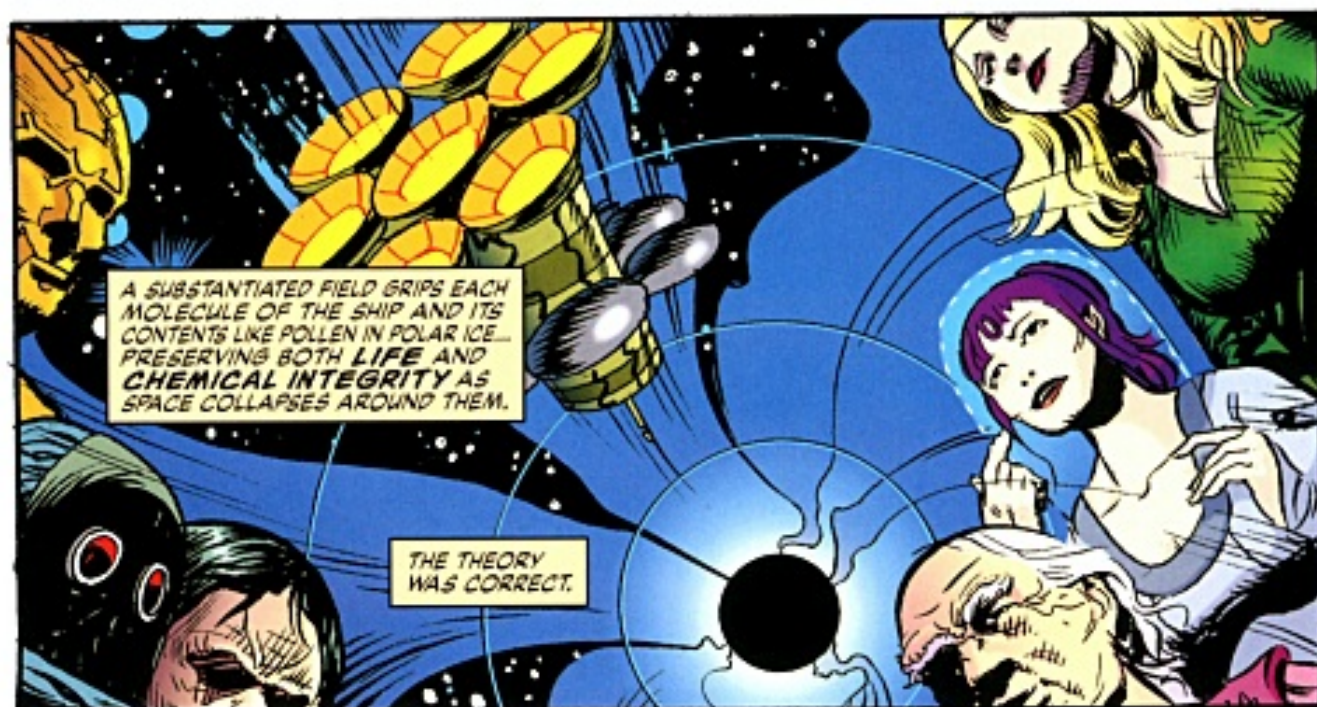








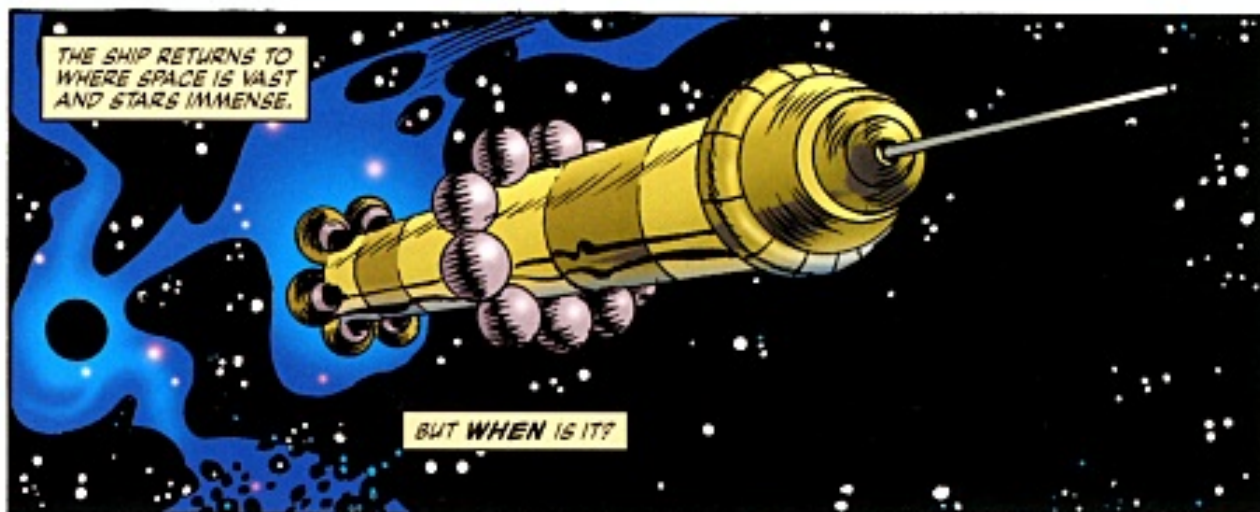












R DARK DOES NOT MENTION
IT--NOBODY DOES. BUT HE
FEELS HIMSELF CHANGED.

THE UNIVERSE HAS DONE SOME
REORDERING OF ITS OWN.



IN TIME THE
PALE BLUE DOT
OF EARTH IS
REACHED.



WHEN THEY INJECT
THEMSELVES, **THEY**
WILL BE THE FOREIGN
BODIES.

PANGAEA
INVITES
THEM TO
ADVENTURE.

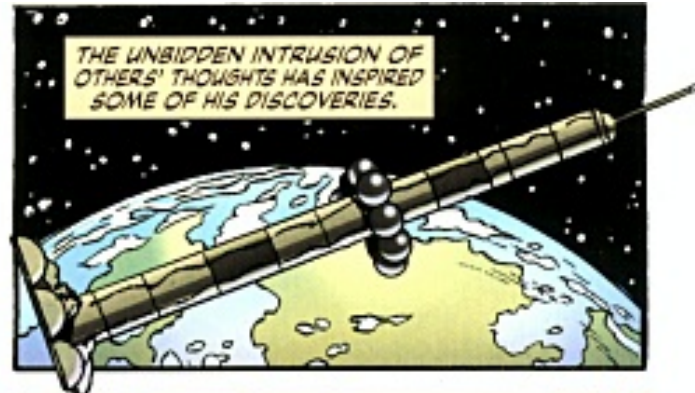


PREHISTORIC
LIFE BREATHES
ANCIENT AIR.

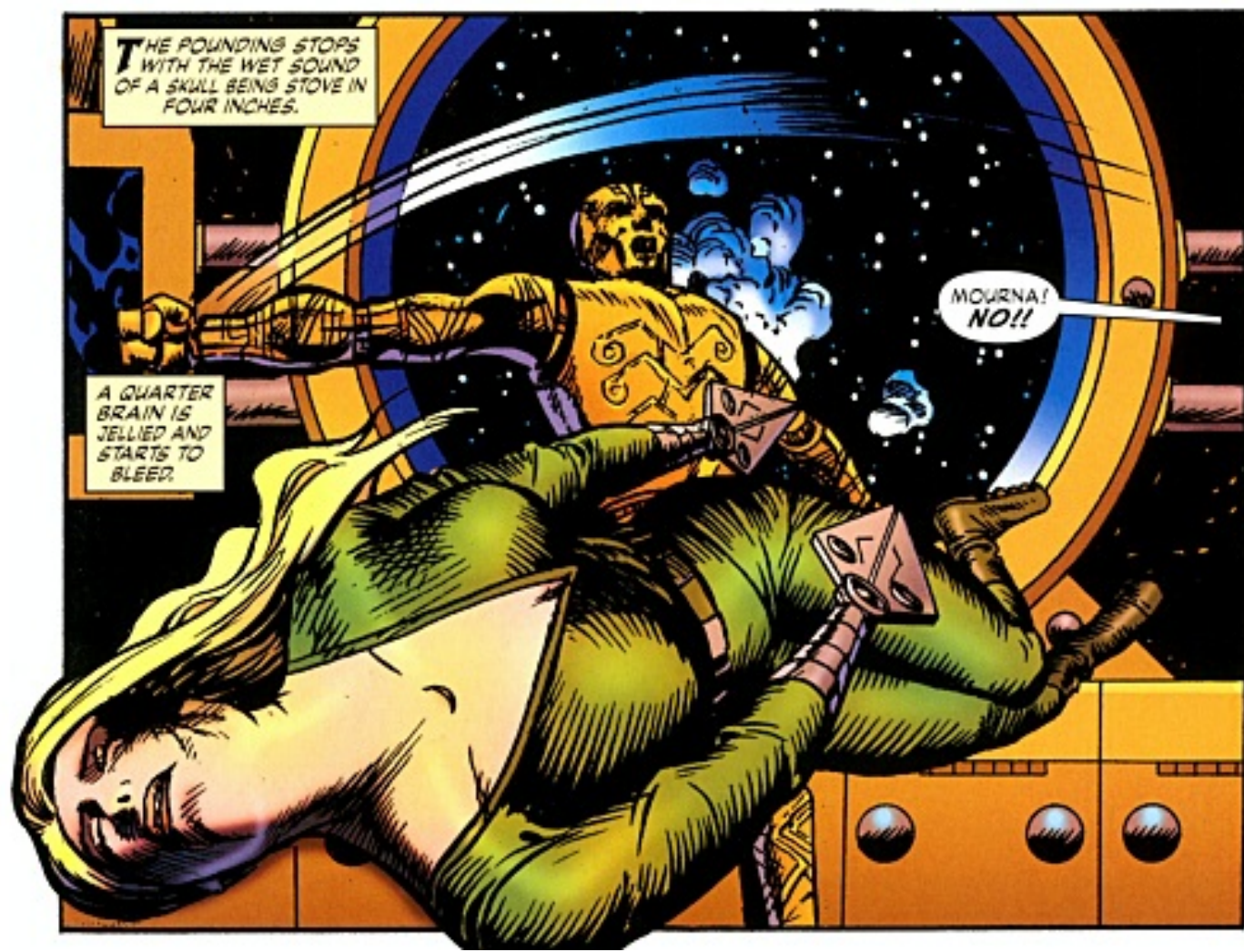


BUT EVIDENCE OF
TIME-SCRAMBLING
IS RAMPANT.













WITH HOORN'S
CAT-BURGLAR
STEALTH...

BAM-BAM

...AND
SPECIAL
TOOLS...

...A CRANIUM
OPENS, LESS
VIOLENTLY THAN
THE LAST.

UUR IS
STILL.

TWO MORE BLOWS AND A
HURRICANE OF DIAMONDS
WOULD HAVE ANNOUNCED
THEIR FAILURE.

THE FIVE LEFT WOULD HAVE
GROWN OLD TOGETHER,
UNDER STRANGE YOUNG
STARS, AND DIED.

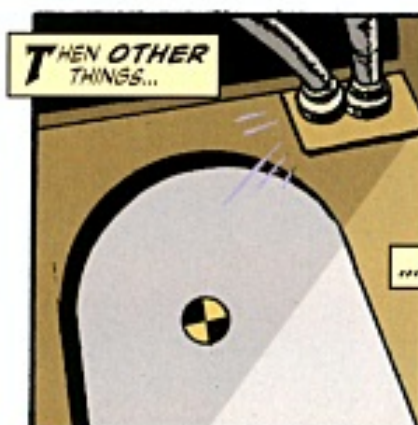
A WORLD WOULD HAVE
SWAPPED ITS HISTORY
FOR AN EPIC OF SCALED
AND SLITHERY THINGS.

GOT
YOU, YOU
WORTHLESS
PIECE OF
STEEL.

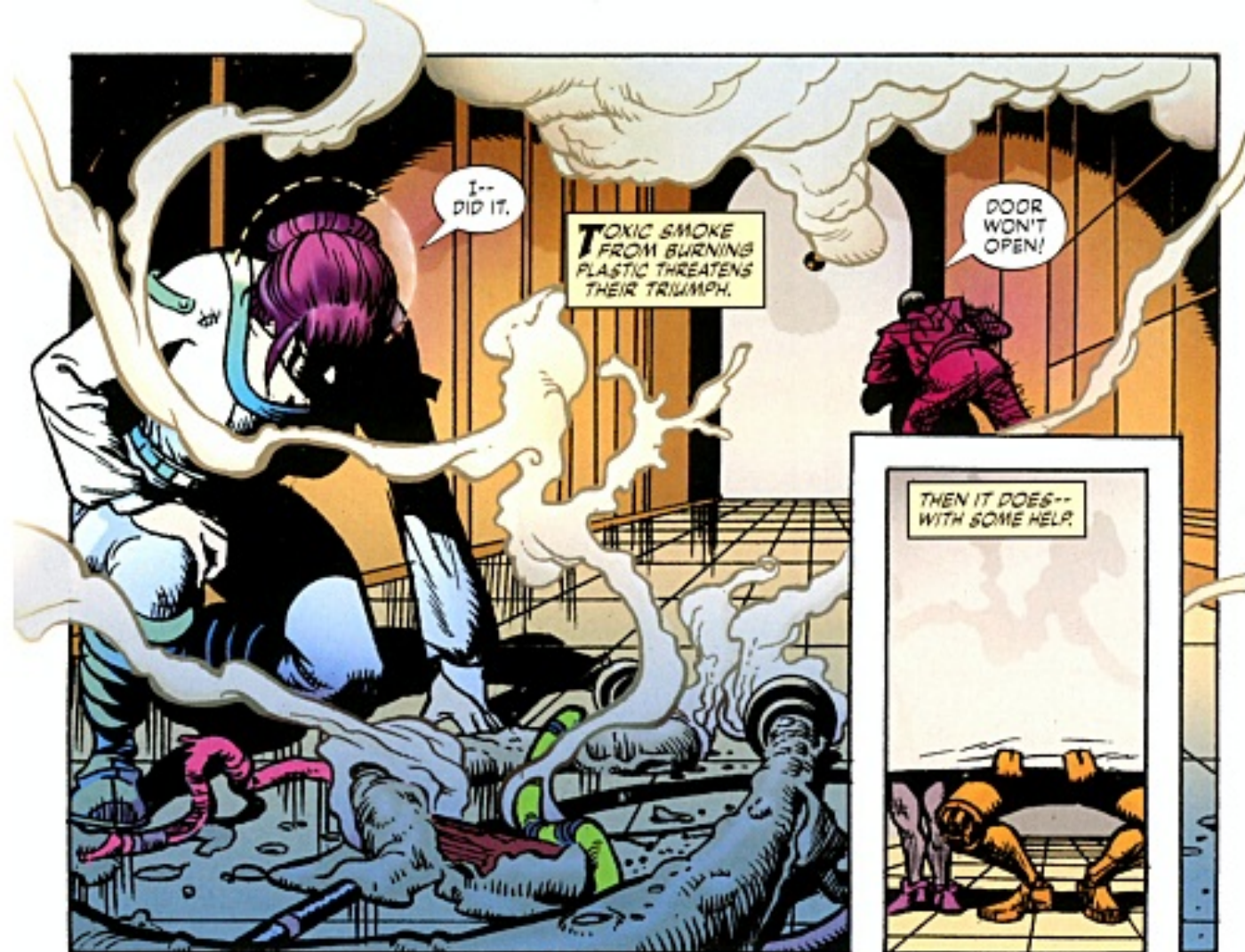
HIS TAUNT IS WASTED
ON AN EXPENSIVE
STATUE.

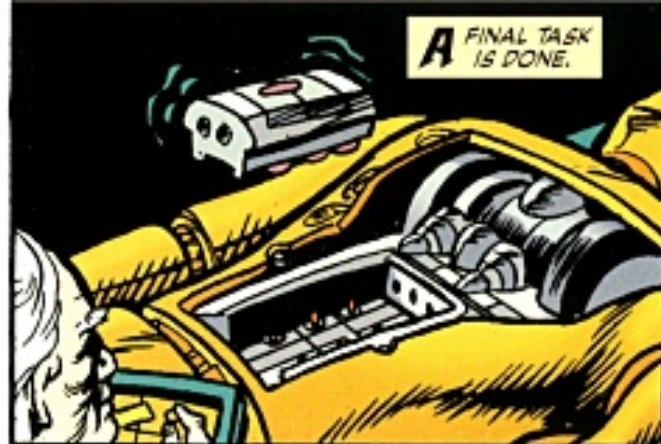
HOORN,
YOU ALL
RIGHT?

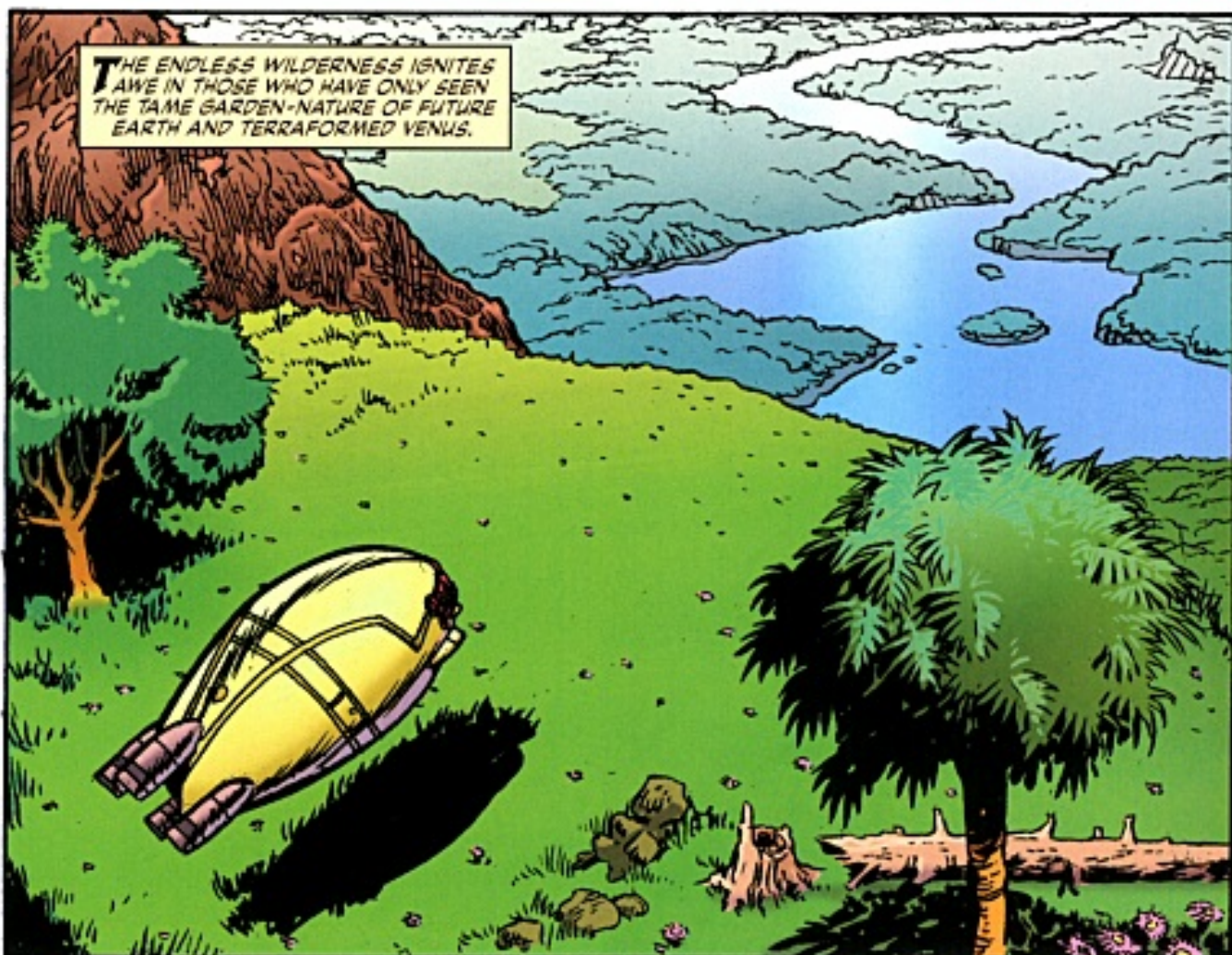












BEING PROJECTED
THROUGH NOT-SPACE
LIKE A SEARCHLIGHT ON
A CLOUD HAS CHANGED
THEM ALL...

...AMPLIFIED
THEIR NATURE.

FOR TANTALUS, IT
MAKES HIM BROTHER
TO THE MOST HUMBLE
OF HIS KIND.

HO,
LITTLE
GUY.

HUNGER.
AFFINITY.
REST.

GO EAT.
WE JOURNEY,
INVITING
DANGER.

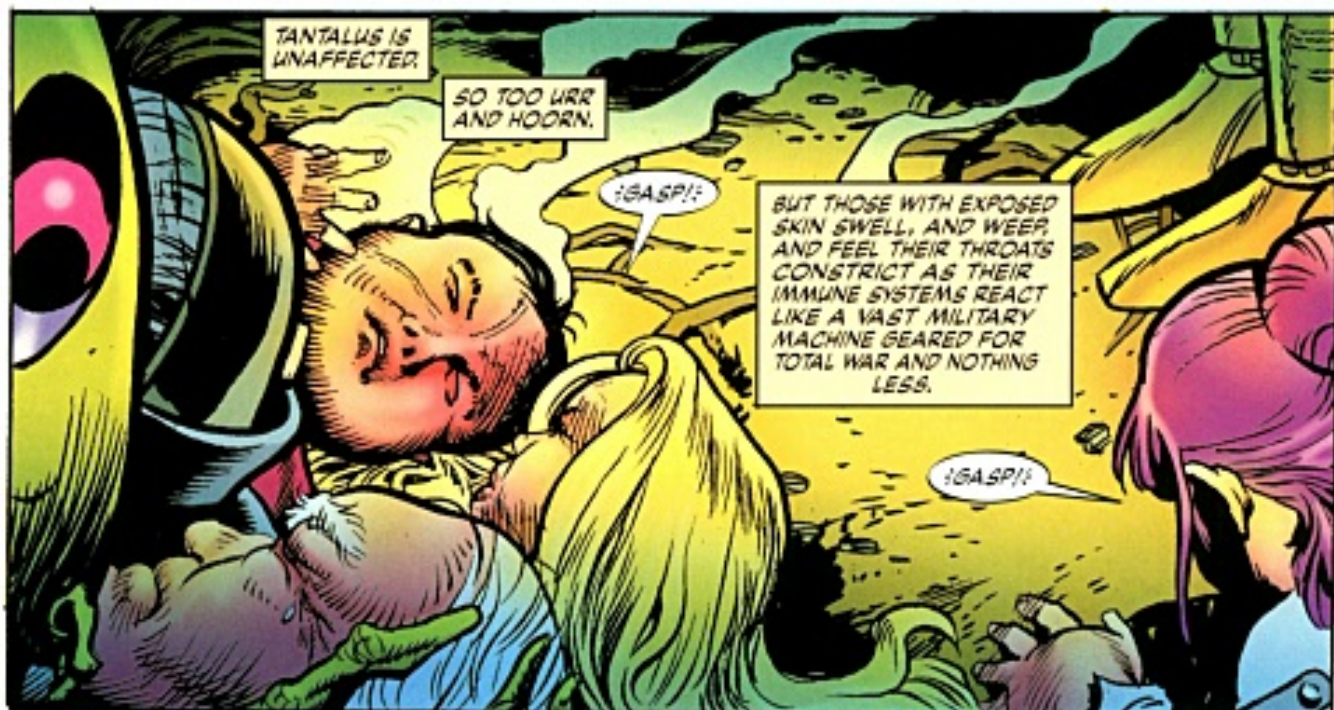
FAREWELL,
MAY YOUR
EGGS BE
ABUNDANT.

IF THESE ARE
THE LOCUSTS, I HOPE
THEY HAVE SOME BIG
SEAGULLS.

I WOULDN'T
HAVE PEGGED YOU AS A
RELIGIOUS HISTORY SCHOLAR,
HOORN.

READ IT IN
A RARE OLD BOOK
I STOLE, SOLDIER-
MAN.









MORE BIG
BUGS. GLAD I'M
IN THIS COOLED
ALLOVER SUIT.



I THINK
THEY'RE KIND
OF CUTE.
THEY SEEM
HARMLESS.



THEY ARE
HERE. COME,
RELIEVE THE
PAIN.



WHOM DO
YOU CALL, LITTLE
ONES?

WHAT
PAIN PLAGUES
YOU?

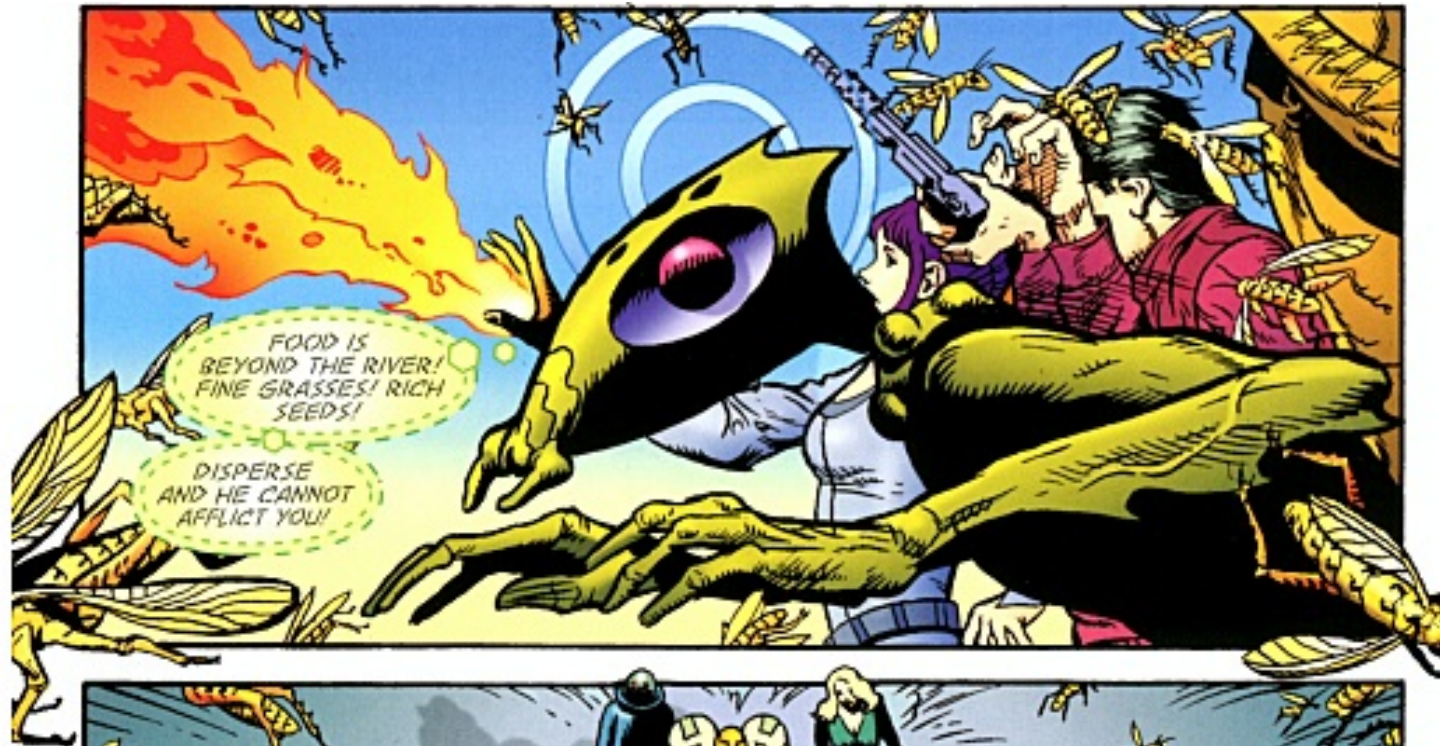


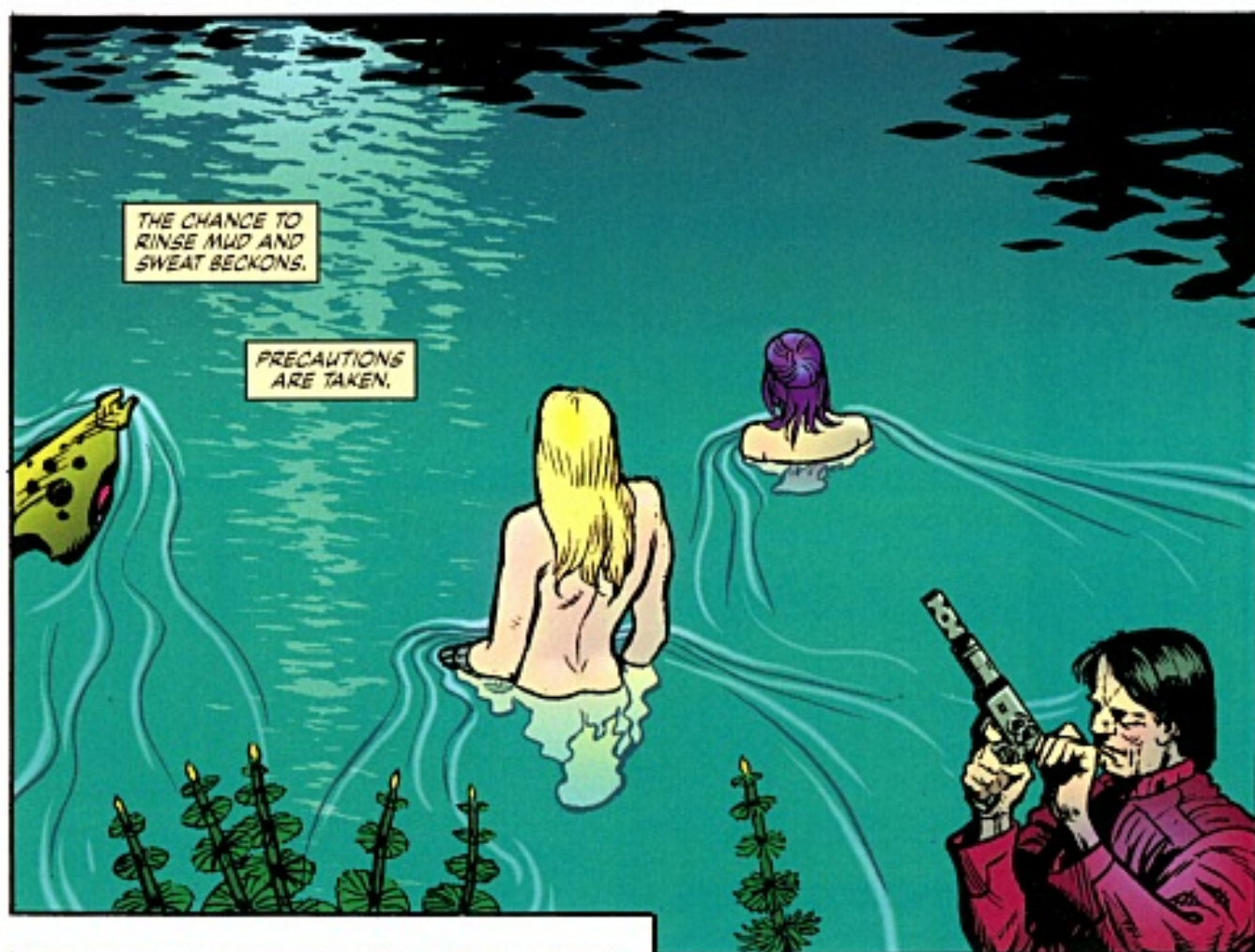
I CALL MY
BROTHERS AND
SISTERS!

WONDROUS!
LIKE AN OCEAN IN
THE SKY!

AN OCEAN OF
RATTLING
WINGS MAKING
THE ROAR OF
A LIVING
TORNADO.











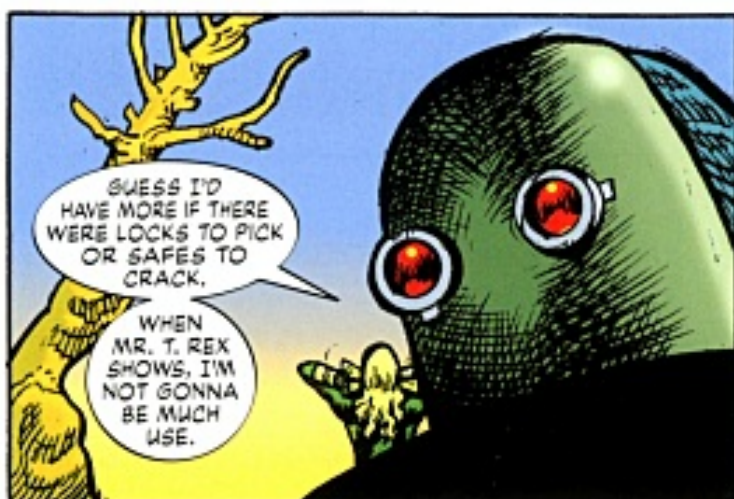
ALMOST AS AMAZING IS WATCHING A WOMAN WITH METAL PINCERS HANDLE THE MAGNETS AND SEALS TO DON A SKINTIGHT SUIT.

NO MORE SWIMMING. IDIOTIC OF ME.



I GET THE FEELING WE'RE GONNA BE PICKED OFF ONE BY ONE, CHIEF.

NOT SO FAR. HAVE FAITH.



GUESS I'D HAVE MORE IF THERE WERE LOCKS TO PICK OR SAFES TO CRACK.

WHEN MR. T. REX SHOWS, I'M NOT GONNA BE MUCH USE.



YOU'VE ALREADY SAVED US FROM URR'S...EPISODE. THERE'S THAT.



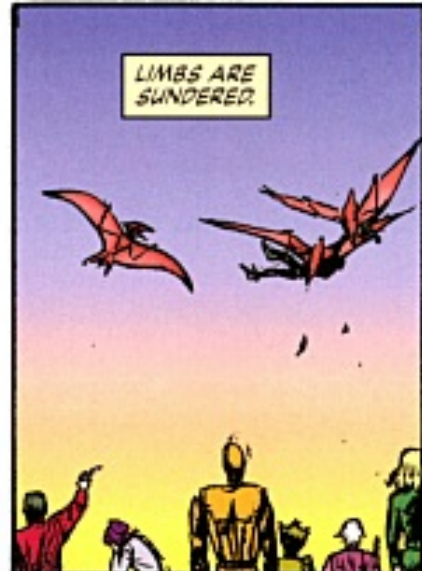
"YEAH, GUESS SO," IS ALL THE FACELESS MAN SAYS.



BUT HE WONDERS IF ROARK MEANS MORE BY HIS WORDS THAN MERE REASSURANCE.

WHAT ARE THOSE SHADOWS?

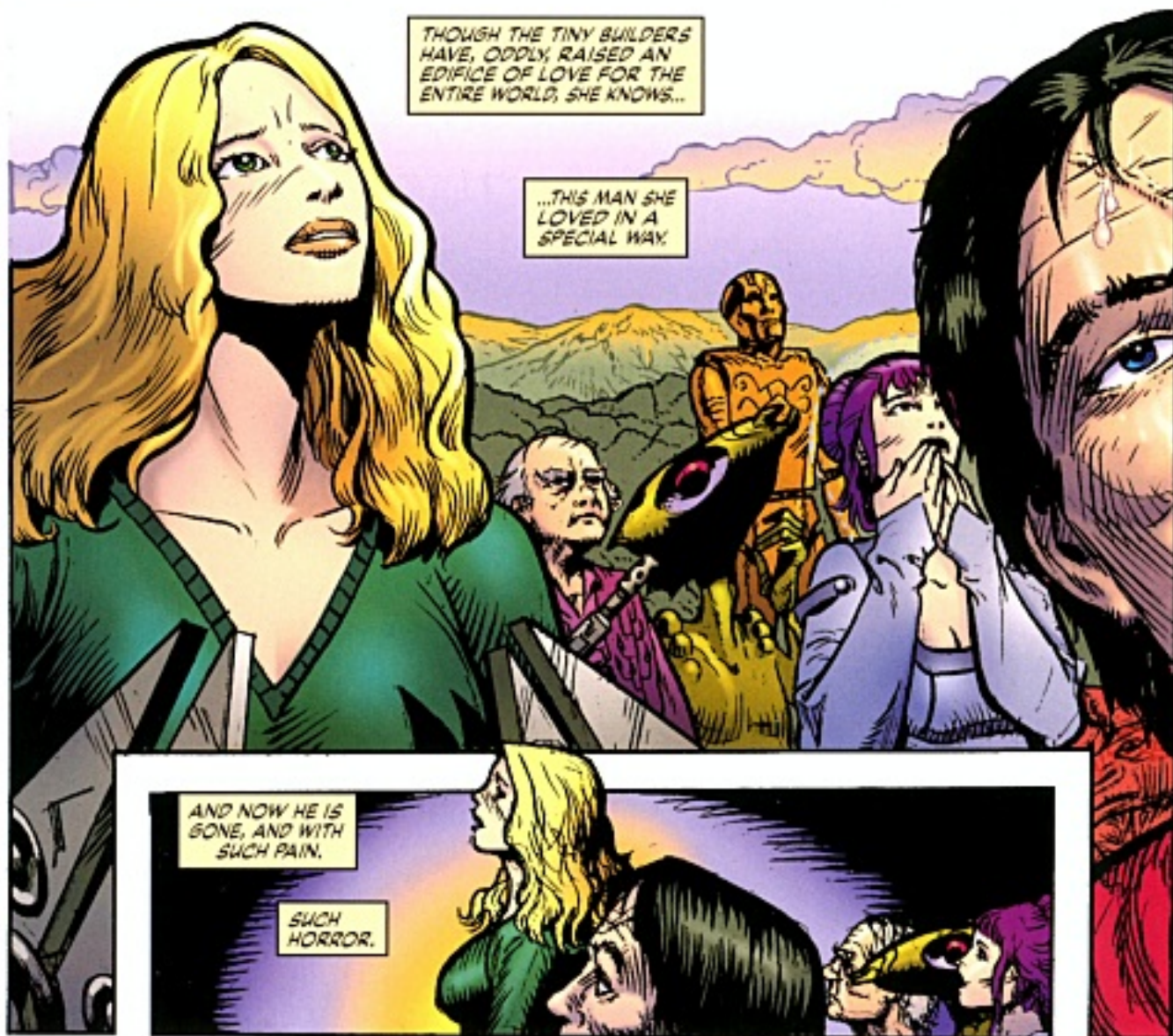




IN A CORNER OF MOURNA'S MENTAL RUINS, THERE IS A SPECIAL ACHE.

THOUGH THE TINY BUILDERS HAVE, ODDLY, RAISED AN EDIFICE OF LOVE FOR THE ENTIRE WORLD, SHE KNOWS...

...THIS MAN SHE LOVED IN A SPECIAL WAY.

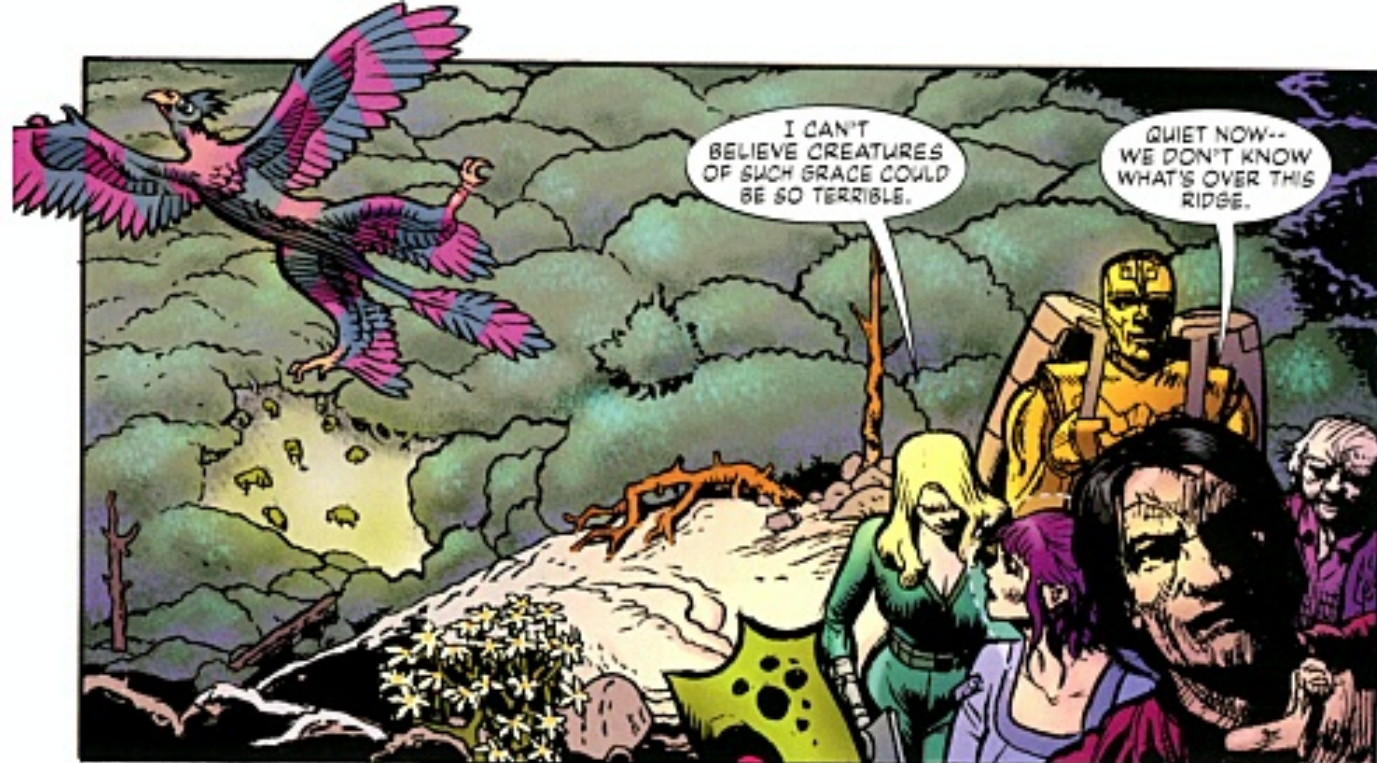


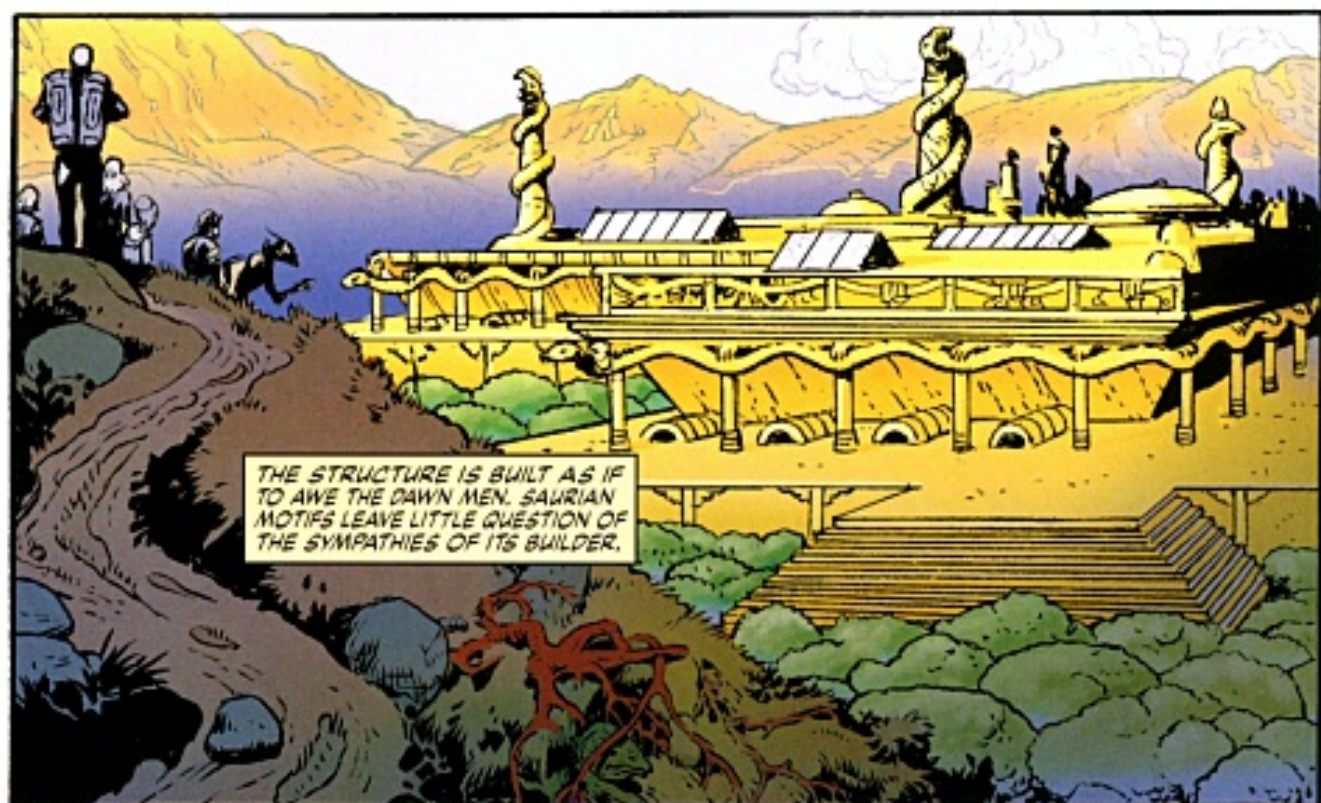
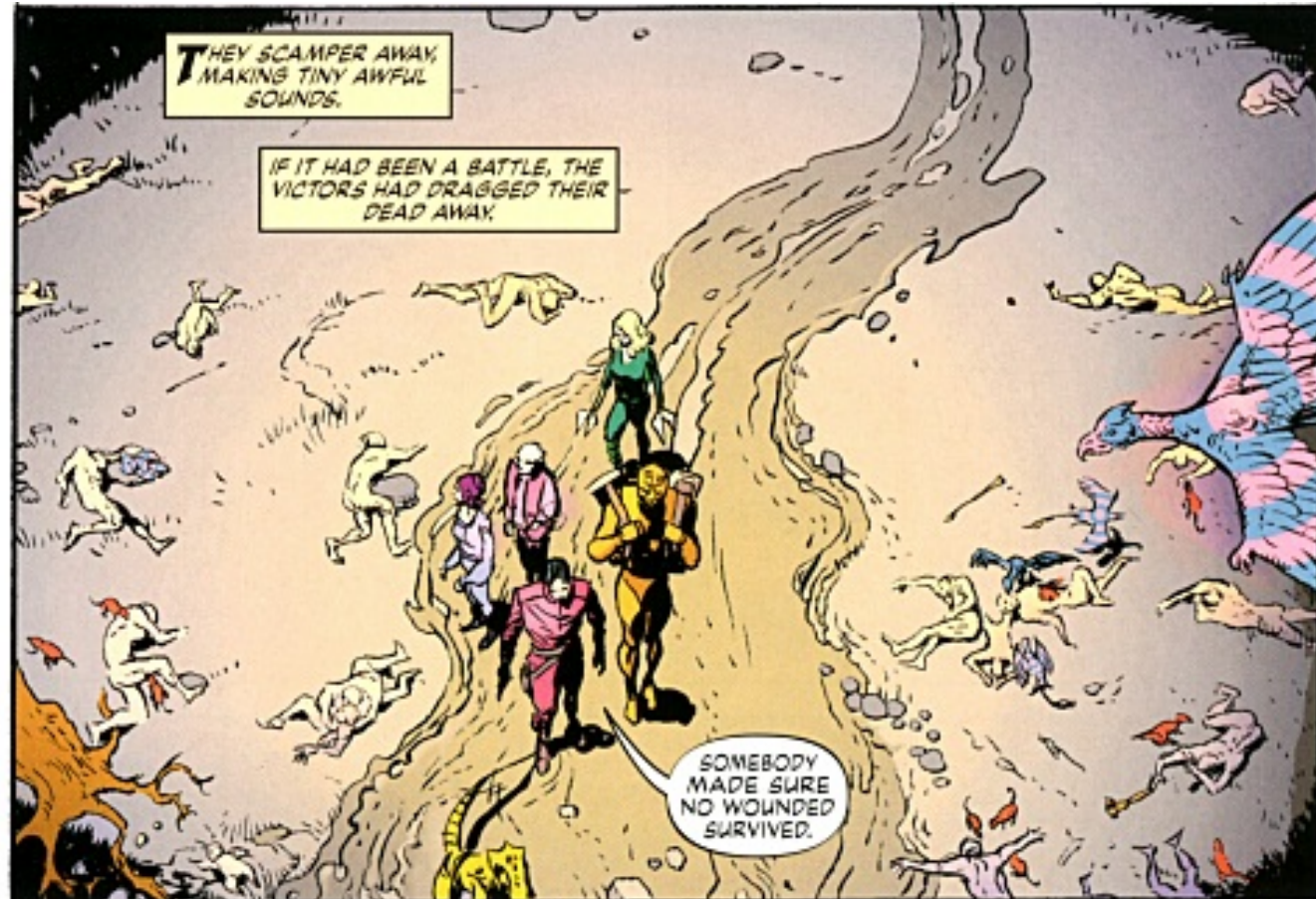
AND NOW HE IS GONE, AND WITH SUCH PAIN.

SUCH HORROR.

THE SIX WALK ON IN SILENCE...

...ALERT FOR THE FLAPPING OF WINGS.













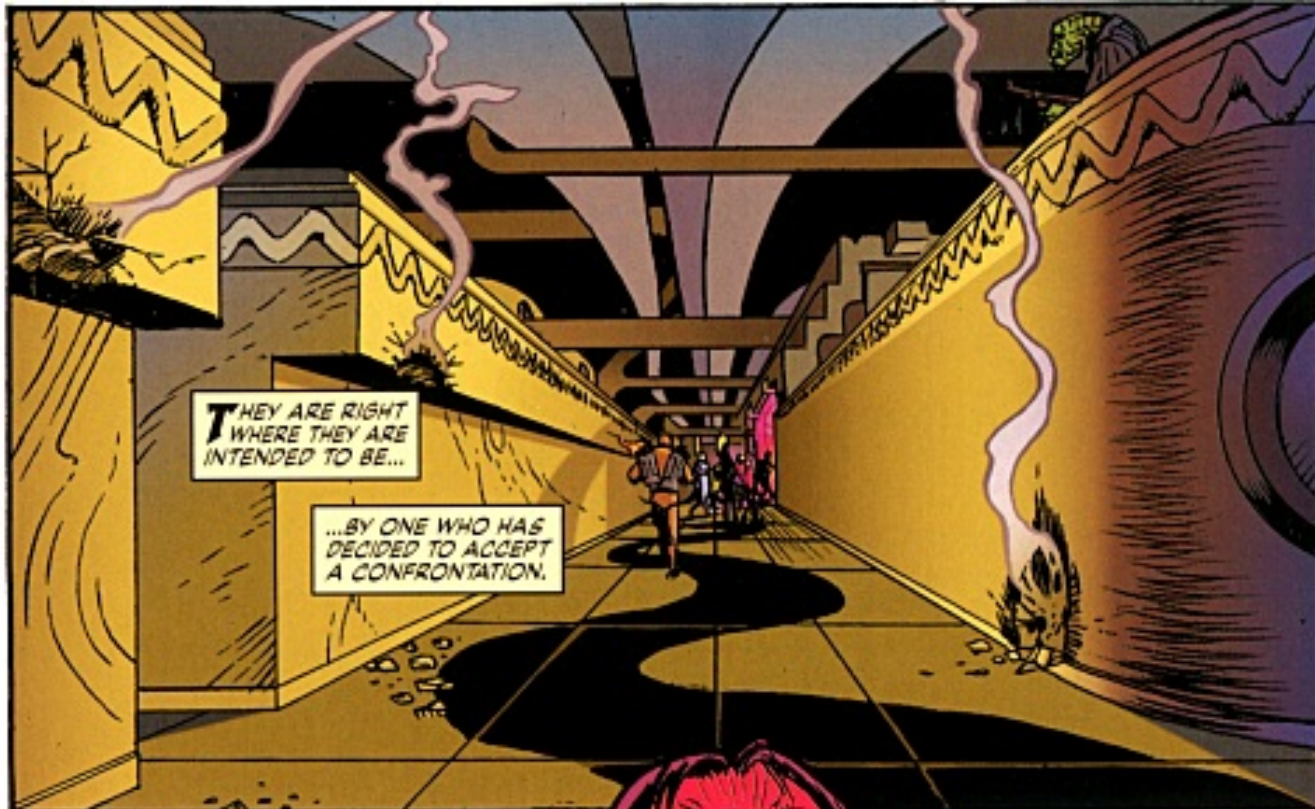














S
LIT-PUPIL
EYES GAZE
UNPERTURBED.

E
NERGY
DISPERSES.

T
HEY HEAR HUMS
AND CLICKS FROM
STRANGE DEVICES.

T
HEY FACE
HIM AT LAST.

ERISSA!

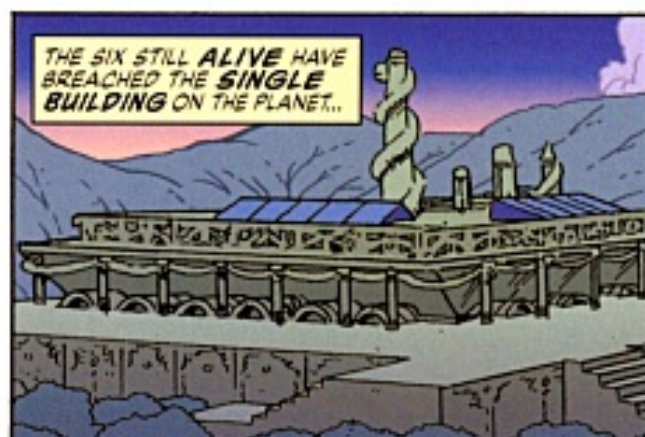


OVER A YOUNG, GREEN EARTH,
AN EMPTY STARSHIP ORBITS
LIKE A VACCINE NEEDLE DANGLING
OVER A BABY'S CRIB.



MAMMOTHS
GRAZE BY A
SHUTTLECRAFT
WAITING FOR A
RETURN TRIP...

...THOUGH IT WILL HAVE
AT LEAST ONE LESS
PASSENGER THAN IT
BROUGHT.



THE SIX STILL ALIVE HAVE
BREACHED THE **SINGLE**
BUILDING ON THE PLANET...



...BUT NOT, SOMEHOW, THE
SUBSTANTIATED FIELD
AROUND THE BEINGS WHO
OVERSAW ITS CONSTRUCTION.

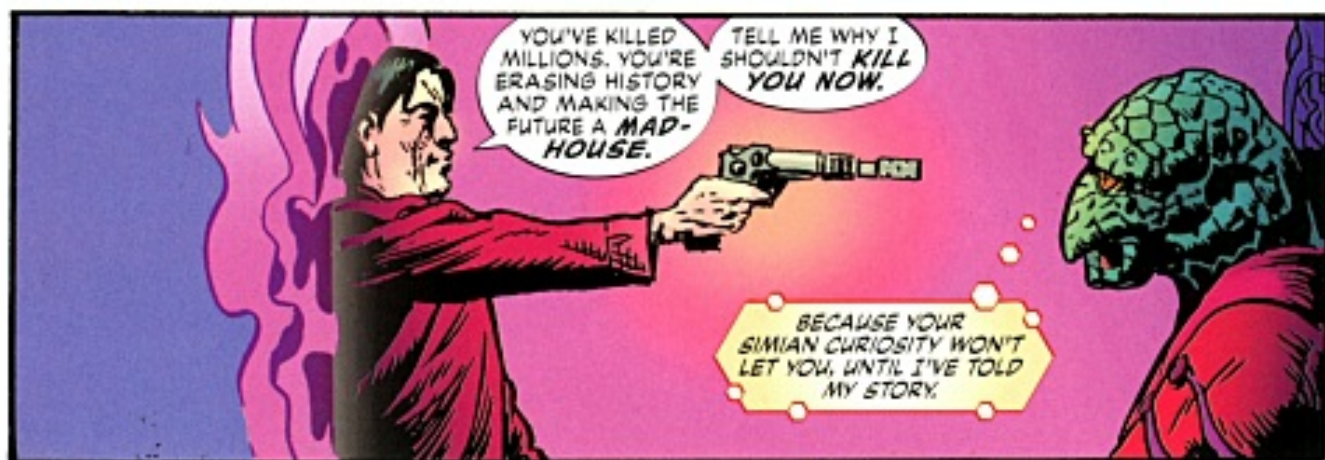
ERISSA!

STOP,
ROARK--IT'S
NO USE.

THE
PHOENIX AVLEEN
IS **CORRECT**.

DOES
EVERYBODY HEAR
HIS THOUGHTS, OR
JUST ME?

I DO,
KENRUS. CLEAR
AS A **SYNTHPHONE**,
EH?





I MUST
SHOW YOU
SOME THINGS.
COME.

WE'LL NOT
BE HARMED?



EVERYTHING
IN ITS OWN
TIME.



WATCH
FOR MY
SIGNAL.



YOUR
WORLD HAS BEEN
A BATTLEGROUND
FOR ALIEN SEEDERS
OF THEIR OWN
KIND.

MY PEOPLE,
WHOM YOU WOULD
CALL **REPTILIAN**,
IMPLANTED POTENTIALITIES
IN THEIR **CLOSEST
COGNATES...**

...THE OTHERS,
IN THE HAIRY SWEAT-
DRIPPERS KNOWN AS
MAMMALS.

ALAS, THIS
PESTILENT, PARASITE-
RIDDEN WORLD IS **TOO
ODIOUS** FOR ADVANCED
OFFWORLD PEOPLES
TO THRIVE HERE.

INSTEAD, WE
HAD TO EQUIP LIKELY
PROGENITORS WITH
INNATE PREDISPOSITIONS
TO EVOLVE TOWARD
OUR TYPES.

HERE
THEY WOULD
BATTLE.

BATTLE
THEY DID.

OVER
GEOLOGICAL
AGES.

THE BLOOD
SPILLED WOULD
FILL AN INLAND SEA;
THE FALLEN BODIES BUILD A
MOUNTAIN RANGE
OF FLESH.

FUTILITY!--THE SWEAT-
DRIPPERS STOOD TRIUMPHANT
IN THE END; THEY LIVED, AND
COPULATED, AND BEGAT THEIR
STICKY, HUGE-HEADED
CHILDREN--YOU.

MY RACE KNEW NOTHING
OF THIS; WE HAVE ETCHED OUR
GLORY ON THE UNIVERSE, BUT FOR
REASONS OF NO CONCERN TO YOU,
DIED OUT--ALL BUT MYSELF.

IT WAS MY
HOPE TO FIND
COUSINS THRIVING
ON EARTH.

IMAGINE MY DESPAIR
AT YOUR SUCCESS--YOUR
TRIUMPH SO COMPLETE YOU
MUST DISFIGURE YOUR OWN
KIND TO HAVE SLAVES
TO EXPLOIT.





SO I HAVE, AT GREAT COST, COME TO THIS GOLDEN ERA, BUILT THIS TEMPLE, INSPIRED MY REPTILIAN BRETHREN TO DOMINATION...

...AND SET IN MOTION THE **CRISIS MACHINE**, TO LOCK IN THIS PATH FOREVER.



KENRUS, I RESPECT YOU ALONE AMONG THIS HIRSUTE RABBLE. PERHAPS YOU CAN EXPLAIN HOW.

HE'S SOLVED THE JANGLE PARADOX OF SUBSTANTIATED FIELDS...

...WHICH MEANS HE'S MASTERED TIME RECURSION, TOO. GIVEN ENOUGH POWER--AND IT TAKES A LOT--HE CAN FORESTALL TIME-PATHS BRANCHING, LOCALLY.



THE ROTATIONAL DIFFERENTIAL OF THE EARTH'S CORE AND MANTLE IN THIS EARLY ERA GIVES ENOUGH--THE EARTH IS A GIANT DYNAMO.

THERE WILL BE **ONE** FUTURE, WITH REPTILES **TRIUMPHANT!**

AS YOU'VE SEEN.

I KNOW IT MUST BE OVERLAP FIELDS, BUT WE'VE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO--



YOU HAVEN'T TRIED ENOUGH OF THEM, IS ALL.

ANY PRIME NUMBER OVER 901 WILL DO IT.

THAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH HUMANS. TRY SOMETHING FOUR OR FIVE HUNDRED WAYS WITHOUT SUCCESS, YOU THINK IT'S A **BLIND ALLEY**.



MIND THE
THRESHOLD. IT'S
IMPENETRABLE.

THAT'S ANOTHER
BENEFIT OVER THE 901
LIMIT--A SMALLER WEAK-
FIELD WITHIN IT BECOMES
STRONG, BUT THE ONE
NESTED WITHIN **THAT**
ALLOWS MOVEMENT.



CARLSON'S
PARADOX
REINSTITATED.

BUT IT SEEMS TO
ME YOU'LL HAVE TIME-
STREAM SYMMETRY--OR
AT LEAST TWO PATHS--
IF YOU ADD FIELDS.



NOT IF THEY ARE ORDERS
OF MAGNITUDE WEAKER. BY
MINIMIZING ITS ENERGY, THE
OTHER STREAM'S PLAUSIBLE
EXISTENCE FADES TO
NOTHING.

IT'S GRAND,
HAVING SOMEONE
APPRECIATE ALL
THIS! THANK YOU,
KENRUS!



FOR YOU OTHERS, MULL
THIS: ALL YOU HAVE, ALL YOU HAVE
LOVED, NEVER EXISTED--OR EXISTED AS
REPTILIAN VARIATIONS.

HUMAN HISTORY IS
A COUNTERFACTUAL. A MAD
FICTIONEER'S DREAM.

THIS
MACHINE, WHICH
YOU CANNOT
TOUCH, MAKES
IT SO.



A NEW
REALITY
BEGINS.

EVOLUTION FAVORS
A DIFFERENT BEARER
OF OPPOSABLE THUMBS,
OF A **SWELLING**
BRAINCASE.

MARCUS
AURELIUS'S
MEDITATIONS
WILL NEVER BE
INSCRIBED.

THEY
WILL NEVER BE
THOUGHT.

THE DICTA OF
A **REPTILIAN**
EMPEROR, UNMUDDLED
BY MAMMALIAN SELF-
INDULGENCE, WILL
INSTEAD INFORM
THE AGES.





THE
GROTESQUE
AND THE GREAT WILL
VANISH FROM
HISTORY.



YOUR CLEVEREST
ACHIEVEMENTS IN ART,
ENGINEERING, SCIENCE,
NEGATED...

...AS IF THEY WERE
WRITTEN WITH INK ON
BLACK WATER.



THE NINE HUNDRED
BILLION EGGS UNBORN
WILL BE BORN.

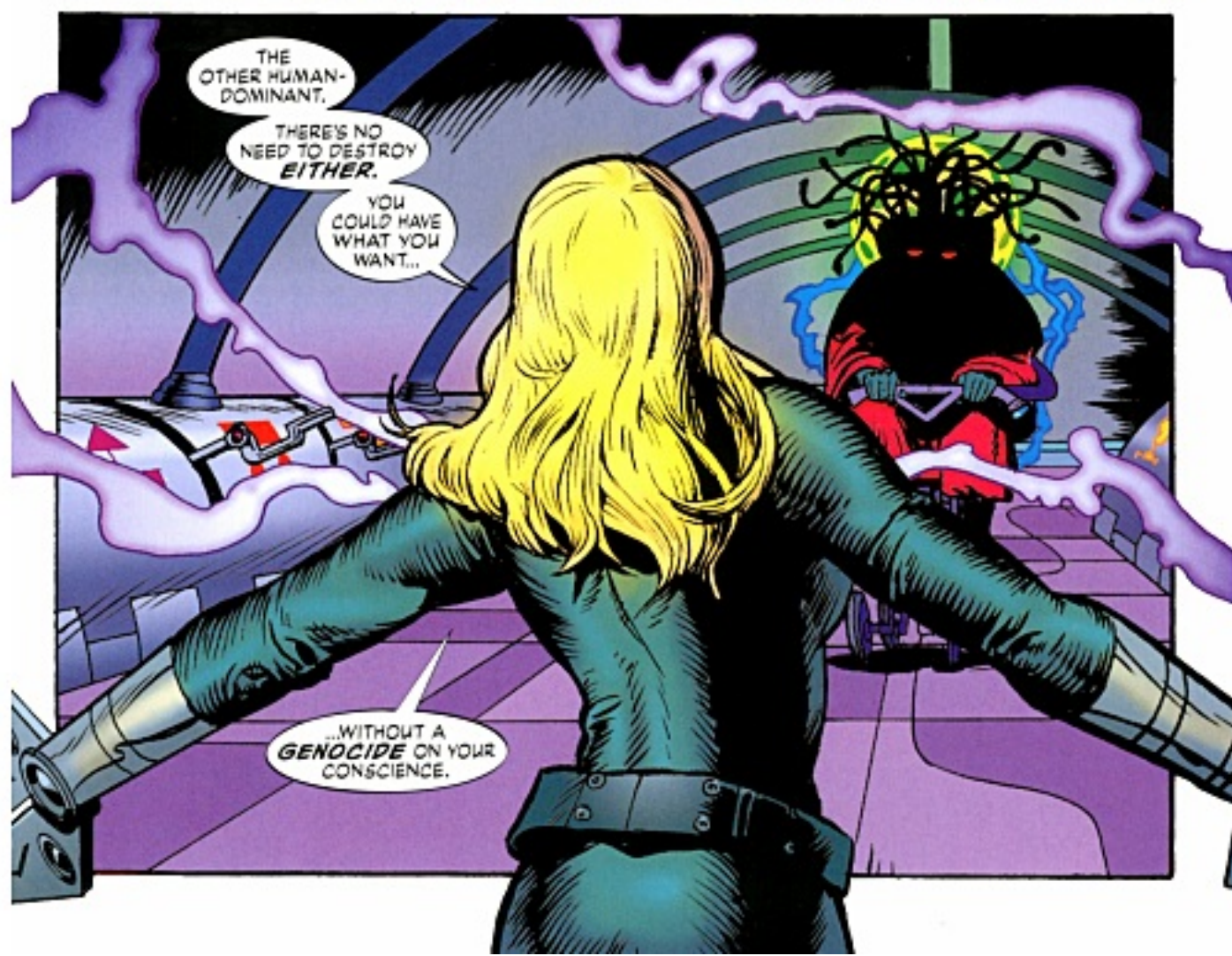
THE LIVES
UNLIVED WILL
BE LIVED.

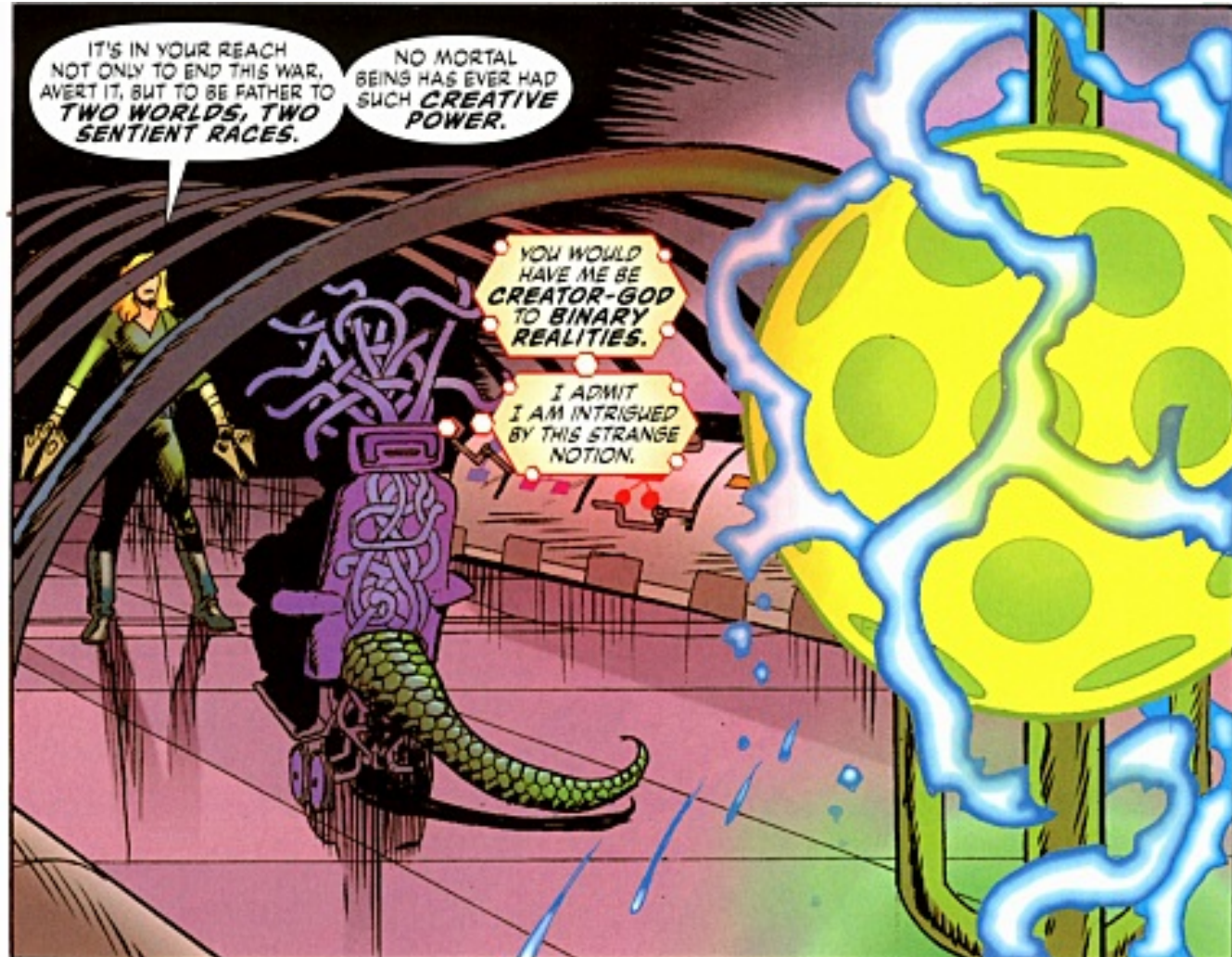
YOU HAD YOUR
CHANCE. YOU BUILT
YOUR UTOPIA--ON
THE BACKS
OF SLAVES.

NOW
IT IS OUR
TURN.

IT IS
JUSTICE.







IT'S IN YOUR REACH
NOT ONLY TO END THIS WAR,
AVERT IT, BUT TO BE FATHER TO
TWO WORLDS, TWO
SENTIENT RACES.

NO MORTAL
BEING HAS EVER HAD
SUCH **CREATIVE**
POWER.

YOU WOULD
HAVE ME BE
CREATOR-GOD
TO BINARY
REALITIES.

I ADMIT
I AM INTRIGUED
BY THIS STRANGE
NOTION.



I, AND
ALL OF THIS
GROUP, KNOW
THE CLOSENESS
OF DEATH.

OUR SOULS
CRY OUT TO BE
REMEMBERED, TO
HAVE MATTERED.

YOU...



...YOU ALONE CAN BE
THE ONE WHO **MATTERED**,
AND DESERVES THE **GRATITUDE**
OF THE HUNDREDS OF BILLIONS TO
COME IN **TWO WORLDS**.

ERISSA GAZES ACROSS
CENTURIES. MOURNA'S
FINGERS STIR THE STRONG-
FIELD BARRIER LIKE LEAVES
DROPPED ON STILL WATER.

BREATHING STOPS
IN FOUR BEINGS.



SCALED
HANDS
TWIST
THE
DEVICE.



HM.

THE STRONG-FIELD DROPS.

THE DEVICE PARTS, A VIBRATING BLADE FLASHES.

IT SLICES CARBON FABRIC, FLESH, AND SPINE LIKE ANGEL FOOD CAKE.

THE ALTRUISTIC IMPULSES OF MAMMALS DISGUST ME!

YOU WOULD CUDDLE CARRION IF IT ONCE WAS AWARE.

MOURNA'S LAST THOUGHT, AS HE CARVES A GORY VOID IN HER TORSO, IS: SUCH A SAD, SAD MAN.

MOURNA!!

ROARK'S
SIGNAL
IS HARDLY
NEEDED.

HE BRANDISHES
HIS WEAPON LIKE
A BOOMERANG,
WHICH IT HAS BEEN
REDUCED TO.

CHOOSE
YOUR
ZONES!

THE GUN IS DEFLECTED BY
THE WRITHING METAL SNAKES
OF ERISSA'S CHAIR.

TANTALUS HURLS
HIMSELF AT A
CLOT OF SNAKE-
MEN.

KENRUS
RIFLES
THE BAG.

URR'S STEEL ARMS
BREAK BONES AND
LAUNCH BODIES AS HE
RUSHES OPPONENTS.

A BRAZIER SENDS
AROMATIC SMOKE
CURLING OVER THE
CHAOS.

GREATER FLAMES BURST
FROM AYLEEN'S HANDS.

THE
FIELD HAS
NO EFFECT
ON MY
FLAMES!

BACK
WITH
YOU!

ERISSA MOVES
TOWARD ANOTHER
PORTION OF THE
MACHINE.

I'LL FOLLOW
ERISSA! DON'T LET
THE CREATURES GO
TO HIS AID!

I'VE GOT SOMETHING
YOU'LL NEED, ROARK, TO
ADJUST THE MACHINE'S
EFFECT--USMH!

URK!

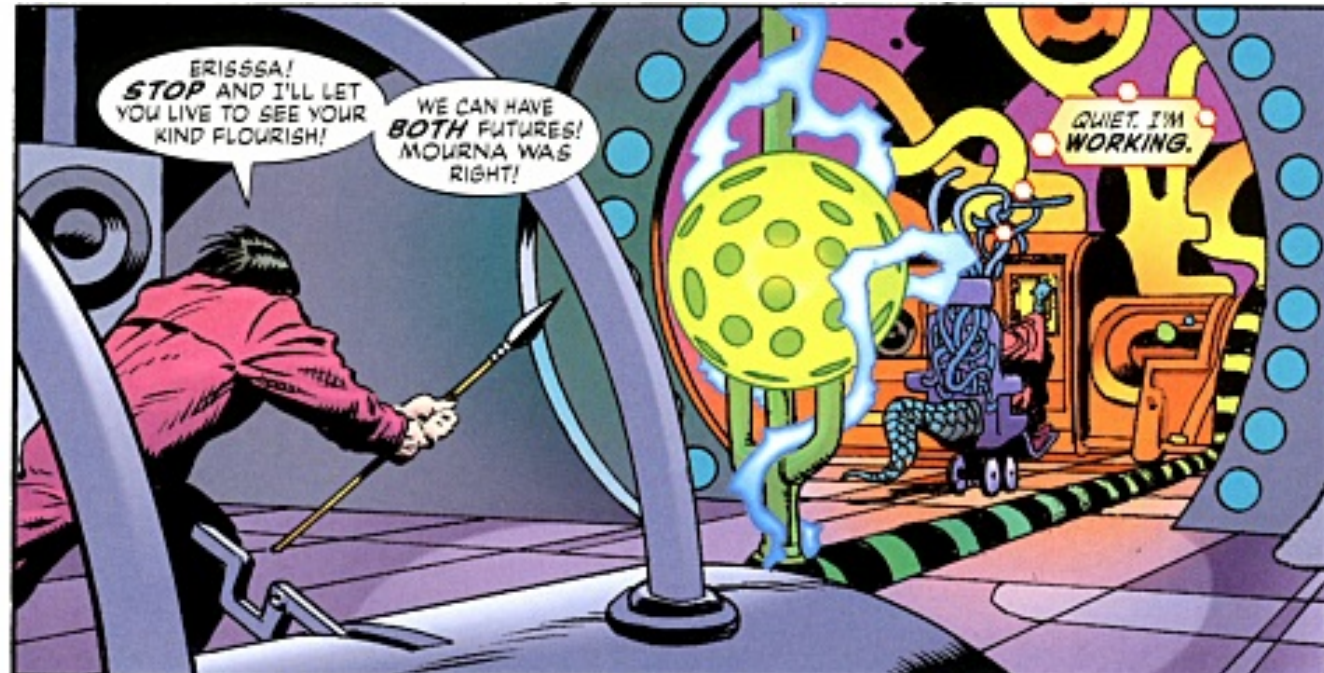
THE SPEAR GOES
WIDE, BUT KENRUS'S
GUN IS STILL USELESS.



SNAKE-MAN AND INSECT-MAN GRAB THE WEAPON'S SHAFT IN IRON GRIPS.









AS THE BODIES GRAPPLE, THE
TWO BEINGS BECOME TWIN
FOCI OF DESTINY.

YOU
CAN'T WIN THIS,
ERISSA!


YOU DON'T
KNOW THE POWER OF
DETESTATION!

THEIR ESSENCES BEGIN TO RADIATE
REALITY AS IF TWO **SUNS** WERE
TO BATHE THEIR PLANETS WITH LIGHT
OF THEIR OWN **COLOR**.

ERISSA LANDS A
BLOW SQUARELY,
DAZING ROARK...

...AND THE RADIANCE THROWN FORWARD
THROUGH THE **COMING AGES**, AND
BACK, CAUSES HIM TO **TRANSFORM**.

AND ERISSA SEES
IT IS **GOOD**.



EACH EFFECTIVE CHOKEHOLD,
EVERY INJURIOUS CLAWING,
CHANGES THE FUTURE.

IN A RIVER WHERE MEN MIGHT
HAVE BEEN MENACED BY
CROCODILES, SNAKE-MEN
PADDLE QUICKLY FROM
AQUEOUS APE-HOGS.

WHERE CHIC WOMEN MIGHT
HAVE TROD IN **ALLIGATOR
SKIN SHOES**, SCALED FEET
CLIMB INTO **FRECKLED
AND FURRY PUMPS**.

ROARK'S TRAINING DOES NOT DESERT HIM. HE APPLIES LEVERAGE...



...THE HAND SLIPS OFF, HIS LUNGS FILL...



...A MOST SATISFYING THUD AND GROAN IS HEARD.



ERISSA?

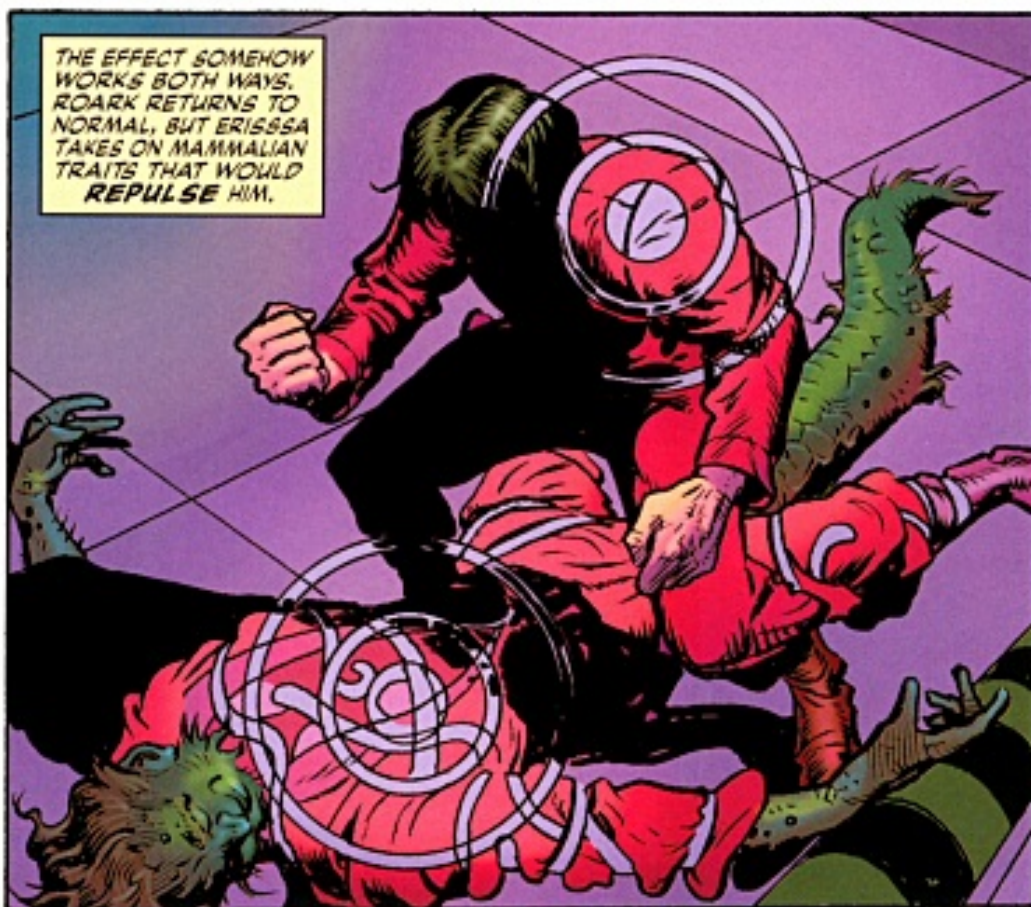


UHHH...

NOT YET DONE!



THE EFFECT SOMEHOW WORKS BOTH WAYS. ROARK RETURNS TO NORMAL, BUT ERISSA TAKES ON MAMMALIAN TRAITS THAT WOULD REPULSE HIM.




EVEN HIS TAIL GROWS FUR, ECTODERMAL TISSUE, MELANIN.

HIS TWITCHING TAIL...

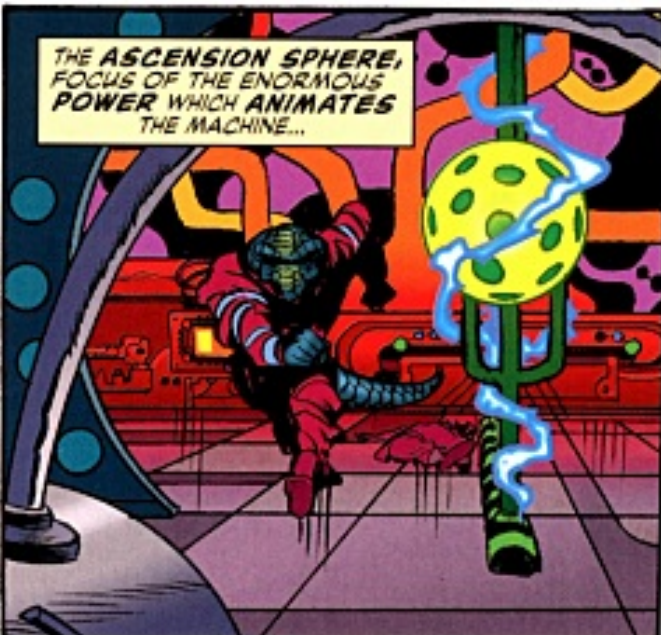






THE MACHINE'S
WORK FINISHED,
ONE MATTER IS
LEFT TO ERISSA.


IT'S **DISABLEMENT**,
SO THAT IT CANNOT BE
RECONFIGURED FOR
ANY OTHER RESULT.



THE **ASCENSION SPHERE**,
FOCUS OF THE ENORMOUS
POWER WHICH **ANIMATES**
THE MACHINE...



...IS **DISGROUNDED**
WITH A **SWIPE OF A**
TAIL, AND GOES DARK.



IT IS A STRANGELY
REPTILIZED
FOURSOME WHO,
HAVING **WON** THEIR
BATTLE, BEHOLD
DEFEAT.

WE'RE
TOO
LATE!





ROARK'S VISION
GROWS UNSTEADY.



IT REVERTS...



...AND REVERTS AGAIN.



THE CAUSALITY...
IT'S OSCILLATING THROUGH
TIME LIKE WAVES LAPPING
A SHORE!

NO QUESTION
WHICH WAY THE TIDES
RUNNING, THOUGH.



AYLEEN ASKS ROARK FOR
A PRIVATE WORD, AND
THEY EXCUSE THEMSELVES.

IT'S NOT AS IF SOME
URGENT BUSINESS
REQUIRES THEIR
PRESENCE.



KENRUS,
WHAT WERE YOU
GOING TO DO WITH
THAT THING,
EH?

TANTALUS, MY
FRIEND, I HOPE TO
RECONFIGURE THIS
APPARATUS AND ITS
FIELD SEQUENCE.

BUT
BRIDGING THIS
GAP WOULD MELT
IT LIKE SNOW IN A
FURNACE.



YOU
KNOW WE
CAN'T.

WE **CAN!**
I CAN STAVE
IT OFF LONG
ENOUGH.

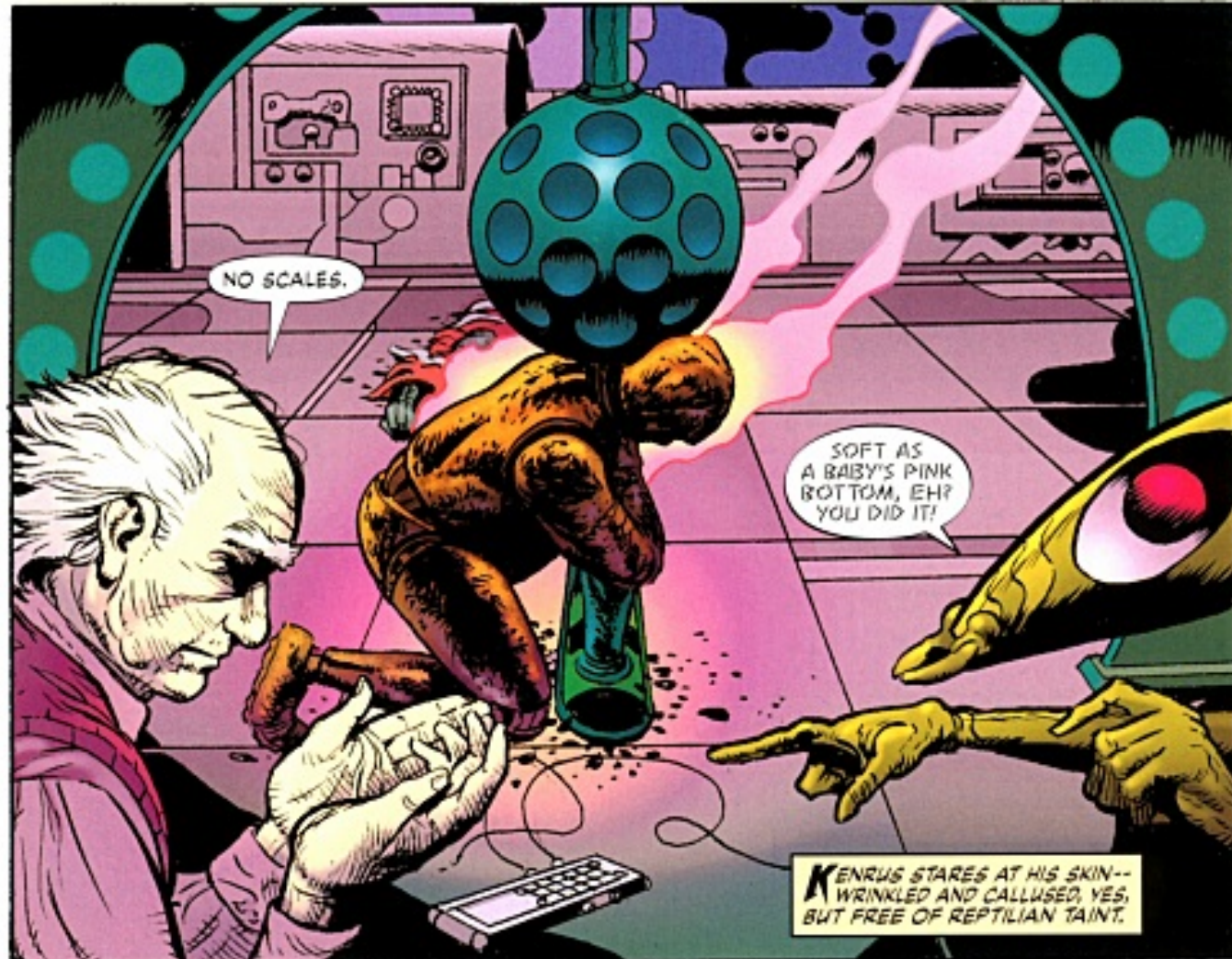
YOU THINK I
WANT TO LIVE AS A
SCALY MONSTROSITY?













THE FLASH OF FLAME
TELLS THEM THEY ARE
TOO LATE.



ONLY SMOKE FILLS
THE CHAMBERS.

THEIR FRIENDS ARE
GONE, THEY REALIZE.

:COUGH:

:COUGH
COUGH:



BUT A SINGLE FIGURE
EMERGES FROM THE
OBSCURITY...

...ALIVE...

...UNSCATHED.

ROARK!



URR GROUNDED
THE POWER SPHERE.
PROGRAMMING HIM, I
CREATED THE TWO
TIME-STREAMS.

SHE'S
GONE, THOUGH,
ISN'T SHE?



ROARK
HARDLY
NEEDS TO
ANSWER.

THE SIMULTANEITY OF THIS VICTORY,
HER CHOICE OF DEATH, AND THE
SUDDEN WITHDRAWAL OF ITS
JUSTIFICATION MANIFEST AS A
TIGHT STILLNESS IN HIS FEATURES.

R REALITY IS NOT
SO STILL.

I WAS AFRAID
OF THIS. THE RESET WILL
LIKELY CREATE THE SAME KIND
OF CHAOS HERE AS WE SAW
IN *OUR* TIME BEFORE
OUR JOURNEY.

ALL RIGHT!
LET'S GET TO THE
SHUTTLE WHILE WE
STILL CAN, THEN!

LEAD
ON, EH?



OVER THE CORPSES OF THE LIZARD-MEN,
PAST EQUIPMENT KENRUS COVETS AS AN
ANTIQUARIAN WOULD THE LOST SCROLLS
OF ALEXANDRIA, THEY RUN.



ONLY THE ECHOES PURSUE
THE FLEEING TRIO.





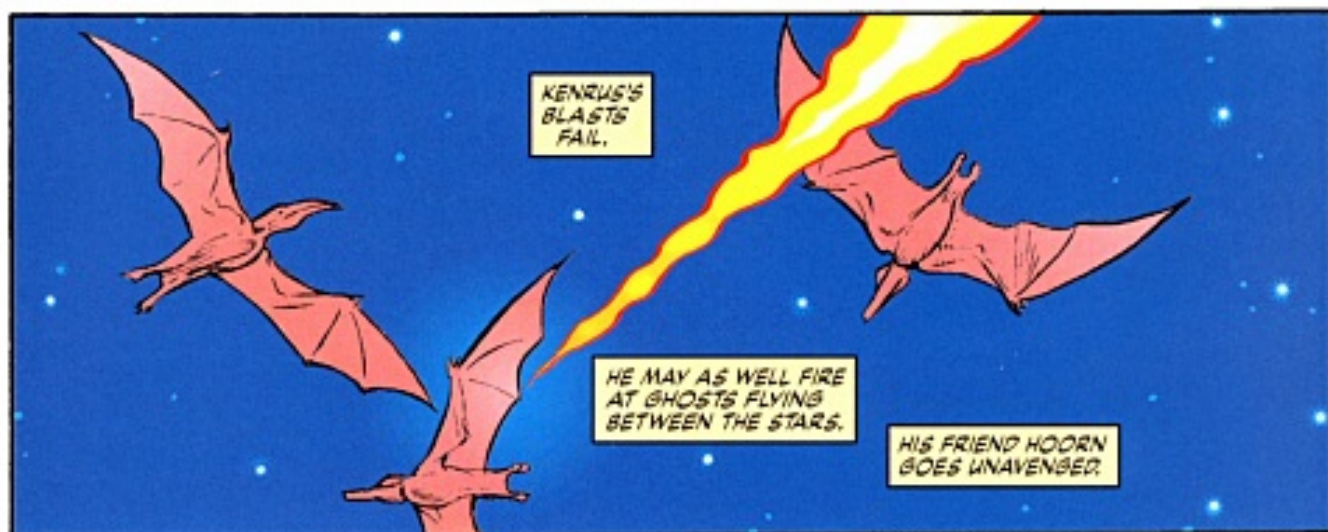
IT IS NIGHT.

UP THIS
WAY, OUT OF THE
SMELL.

SLIMY
DEVILS!



KCHAH!



KENRUS'S
BLASTS
FAIL.

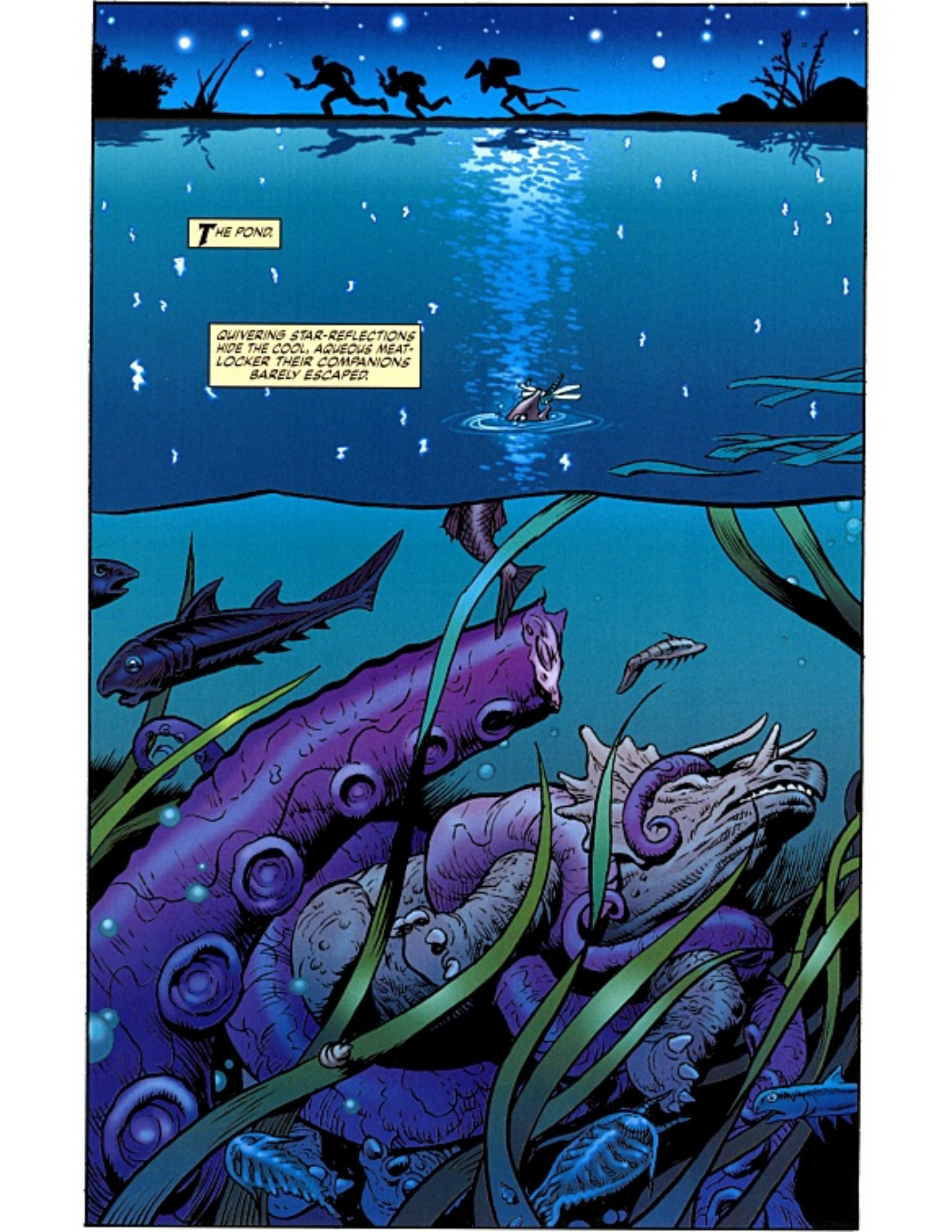
HE MAY AS WELL FIRE
AT GHOSTS FLYING
BETWEEN THE STARS.

HIS FRIEND HOORN
GOES UNAVENGED.




ANGER SPENT,
KENRUS LOWERS
HIS NOW-HOT GUN.

AMID PREY-CREATURES
HUDDLED AGAINST THE
FEARFUL NIGHT, THEY
HURRY ON.



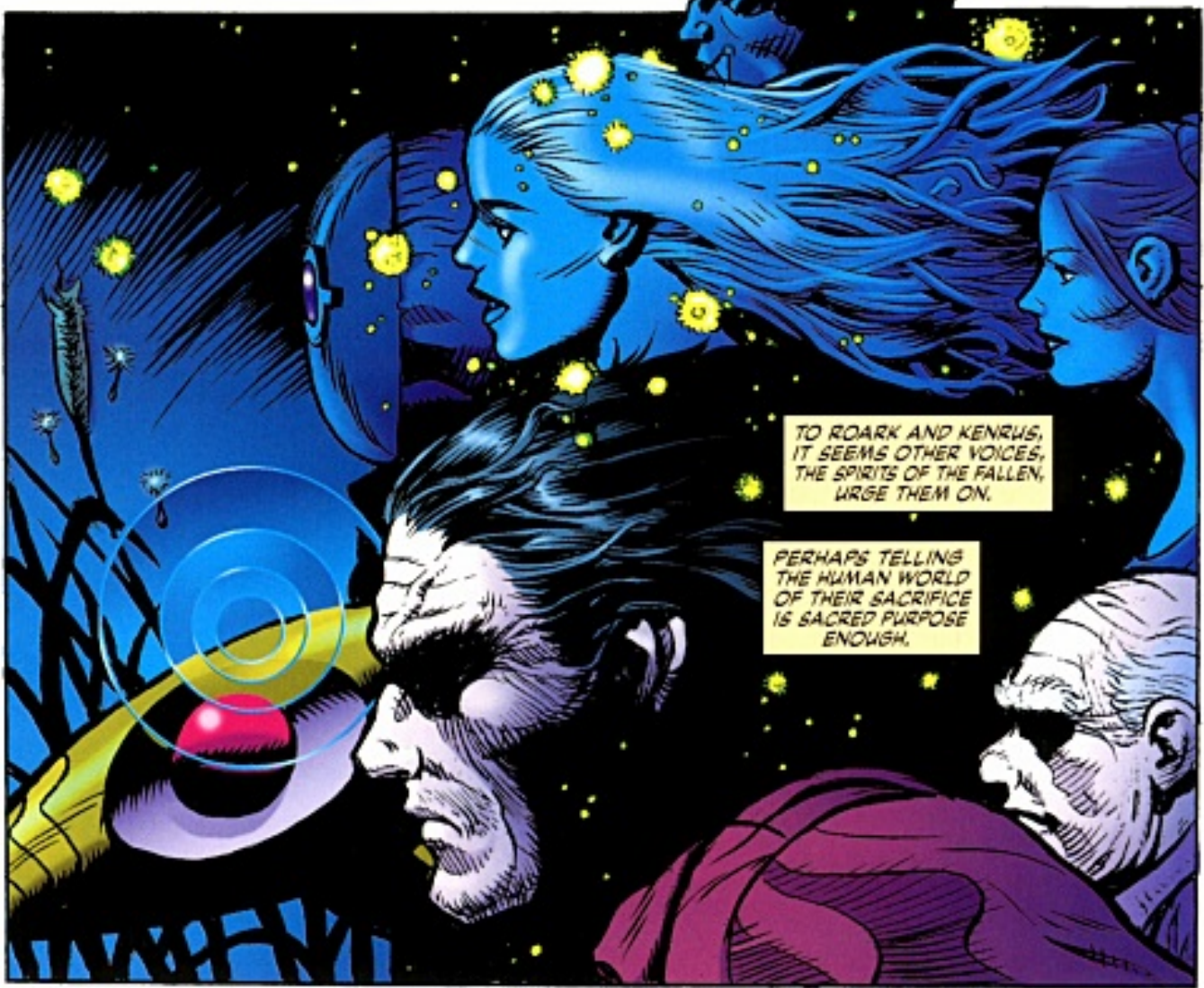
THE POND.

QUIVERING STAR-REFLECTIONS
HIDE THE COOL, AQUEOUS MEAT-
LOCKER THEIR COMPANIONS
BARELY ESCAPED.



AS THEY PASS THE PLACE
OF THE LOCUST ATTACK,
A NEW COMMUNITY HAILS
TANTALUS IN HIS FLIGHT.

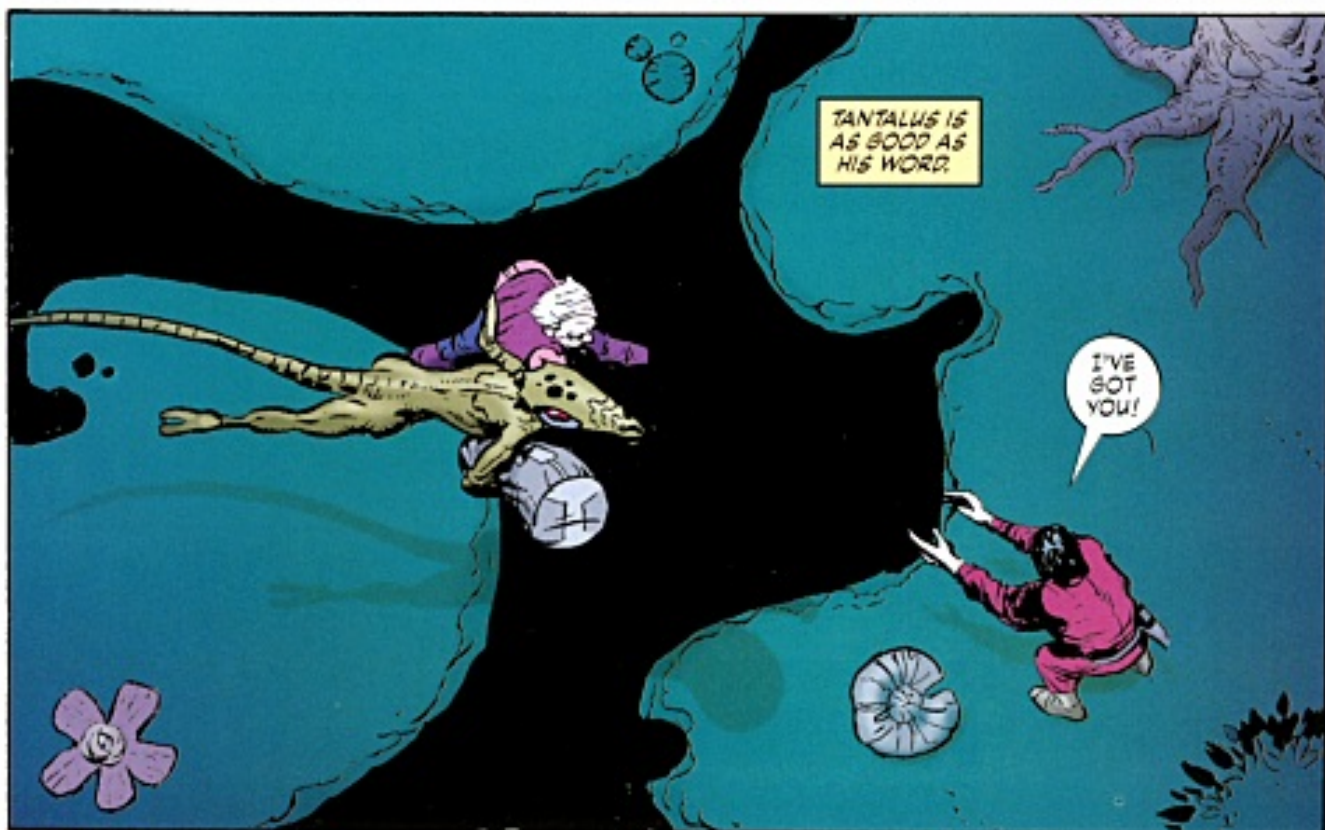
FIREFLIES BLINK IN
SYNCHRONY AS IF
TO CELEBRATE THEIR
FOOTFALLS.



TO ROARK AND KENRUS,
IT SEEMS OTHER VOICES,
THE SPIRITS OF THE FALLEN,
URGE THEM ON.

PERHAPS TELLING
THE HUMAN WORLD
OF THEIR SACRIFICE
IS SACRED PURPOSE
ENOUGH.

THE MARSH.

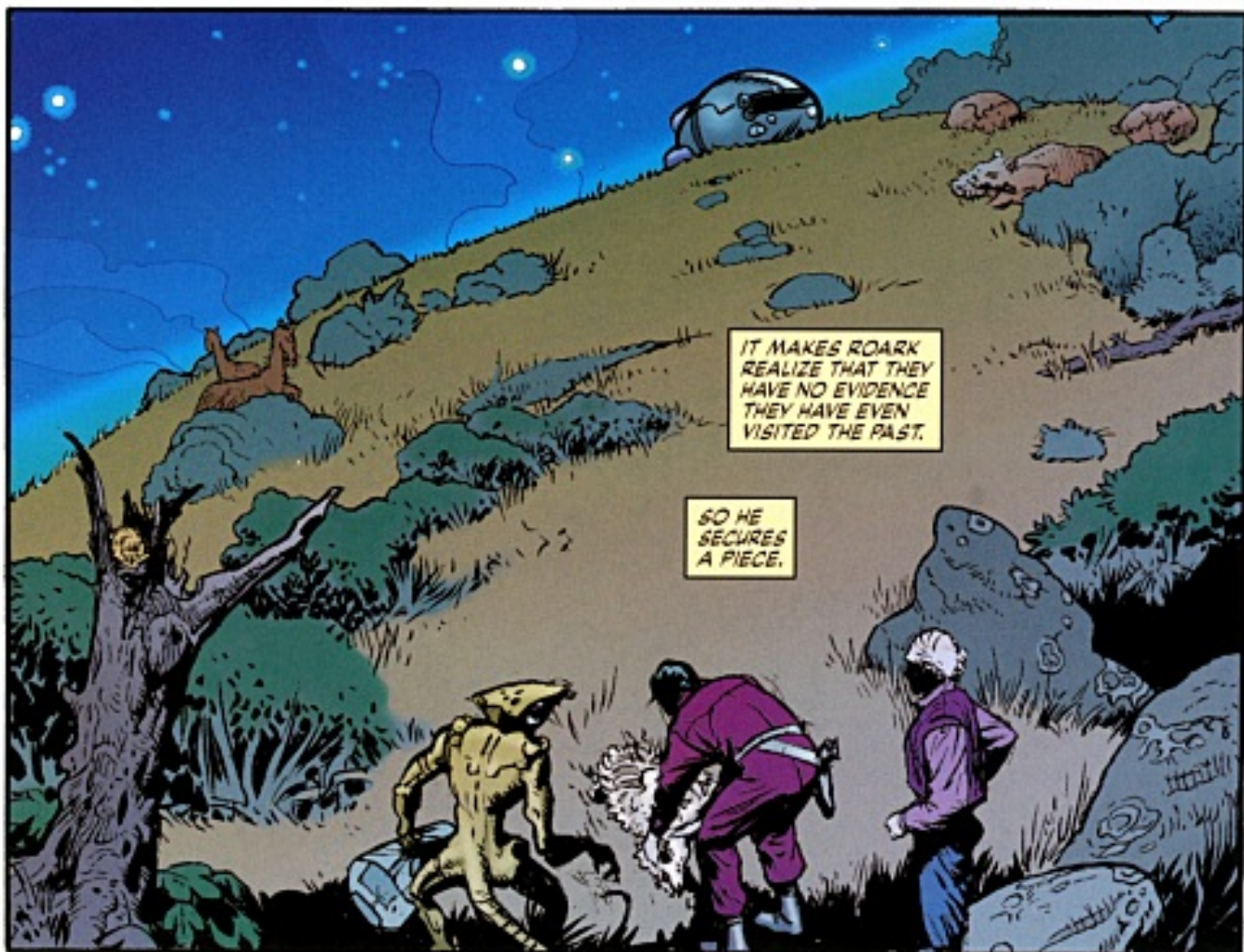


AS THEY TREAD ON CHARRED STALKS,
THE BITTER THOUGHT COMES THAT
THIS LAST WORK OF AYLEEN WILL BE
HIDDEN BY NEW GROWTH IN A YEAR.



IT MAKES ROARK
REALIZE THAT THEY
HAVE NO EVIDENCE
THEY HAVE EVEN
VISITED THE PAST.

SO HE
SECURES
A PIECE.



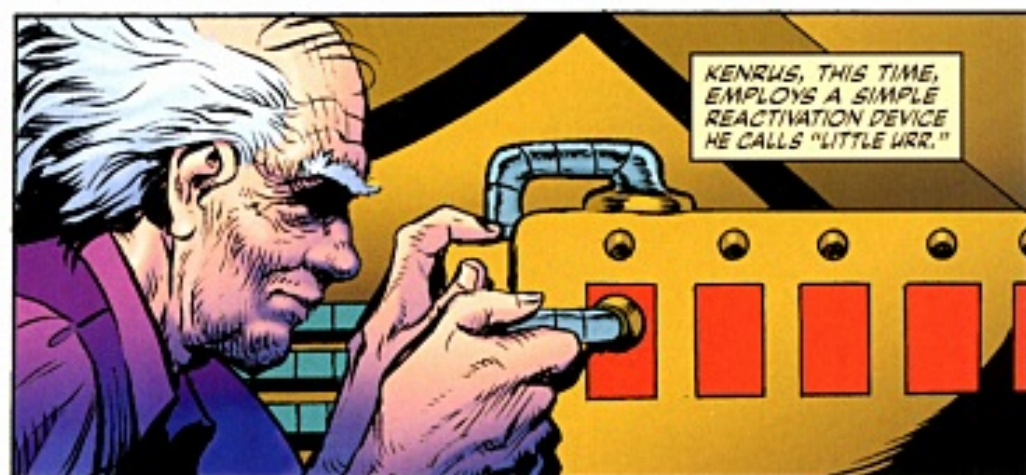
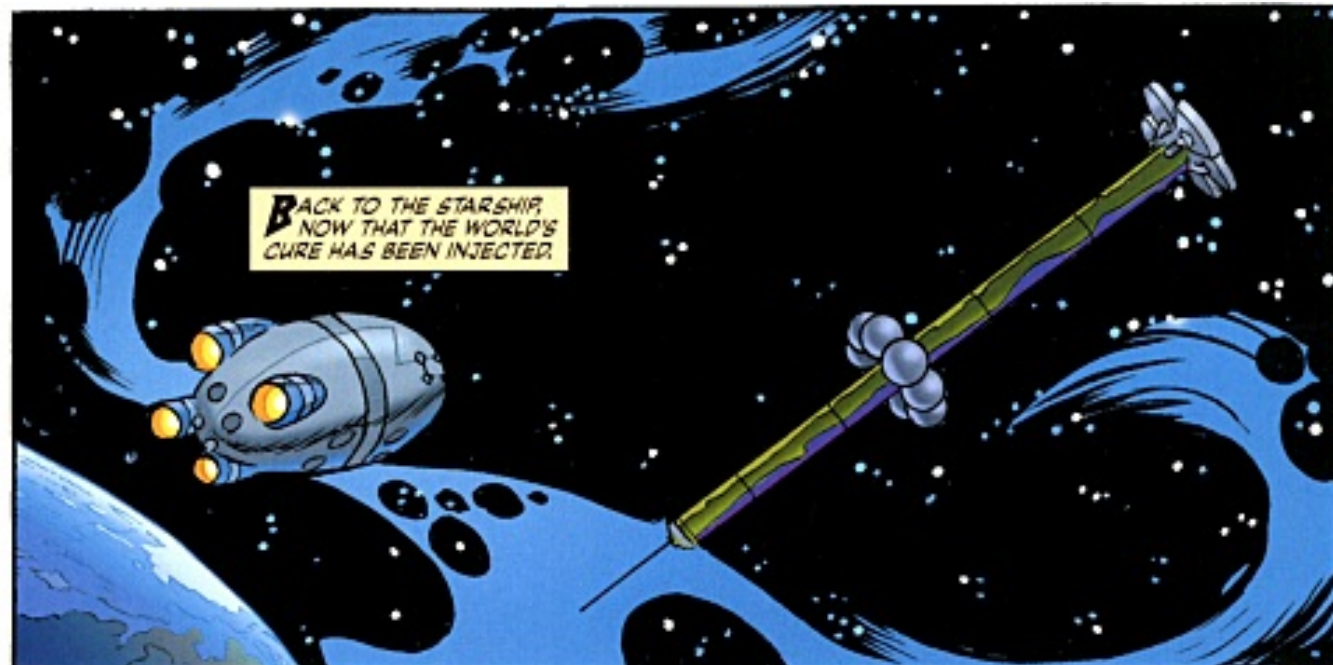


A PACHYCEPHALOSAURUS SKULL WILL TELL THE TALE, AND IN THE MEANTIME SERVE AS THEIR SILENT MASCOT.



UNGLUTES SCATTER AS THEY DISTURB THE YOUNG EARTH ONE LAST TIME.







RARK WRITES AN ACCOUNT OF
THEIR MISSION, CLOAKING THE
HEART-SHREDDING EVENTS WITH
BLOODLESS MILITARY TERMINOLOGY.

KENRUS ATTEMPTS TO EMPLOY
THE NEW PHYSICAL PRINCIPLES
A GLOATING SNAKE-MAN FLUNG
AT HIM LIKE A HANDFUL OF GEMS.

TANTALUS FINDS
CHARDONNAY A
PROPER ACCOMPANIMENT
TO STAR SYSTEMS
BURSTING AND
DYING INSIDE
HIS SKULL.





"LITTLE URR" IS AS FAITHFUL AS HIS NAMESAKE.



THE TRAVELERS CHECK THE LENGTH OF THEIR LIMBS AS A SAILOR MIGHT INSPECT HIS RIGGING AFTER A STORM.

KENRUS, I'VE HAD A HEMORRHAGIC FEVER THAT LEFT ME FEELING BETTER THAN THAT.

MAYBE THAT'S A GOOD THING. IT'LL PETER TOURISTS.

BETTER CHECK WE'RE AT THE RIGHT TIME, EH?



A SURVEY OF CONSTELLATIONS, AND OF RED SHIFTS OF IDENTIFIED GALAXIES, TELLS THEM THEY ARE.

THEY DEPART THE BLACK HOLE'S SPHERE OF INFLUENCE.



THE TRIP TO EARTH TAKES
THE SAME TIME AS BEFORE.



AT LENGTH THE
BLUE PLANET
IS EVIDENT.

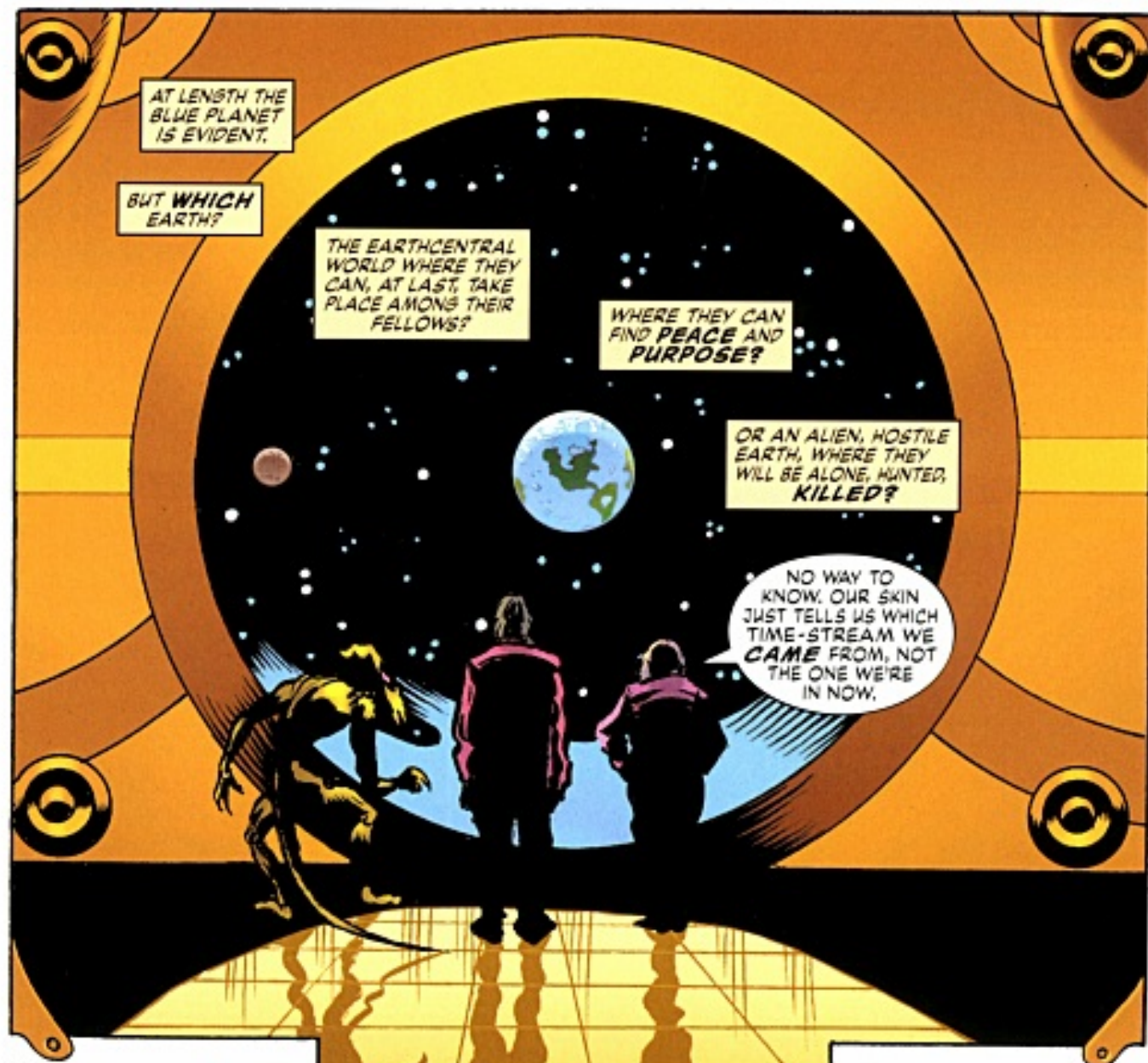
BUT WHICH
EARTH?

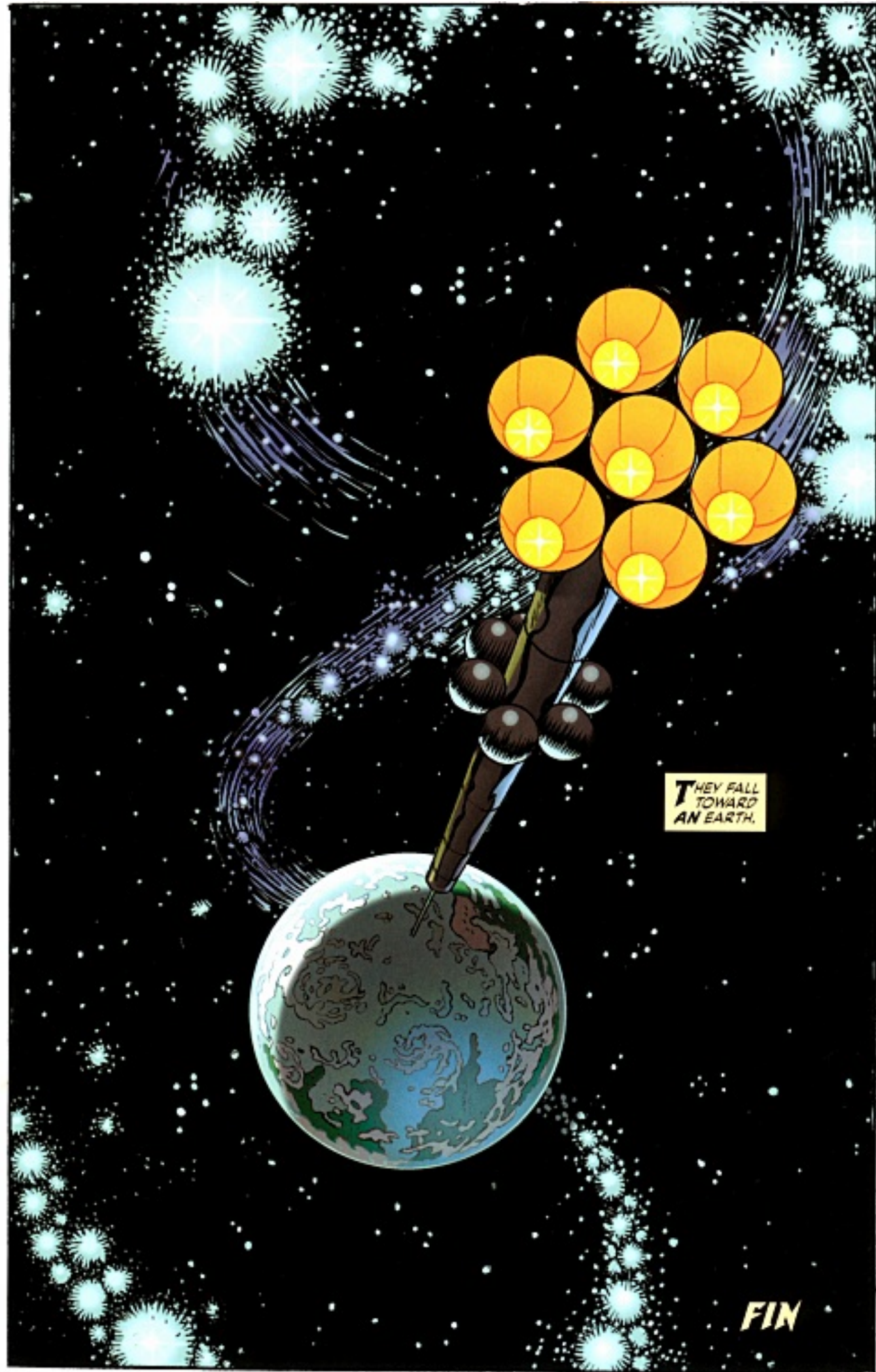
THE EARTH-CENTRAL
WORLD WHERE THEY
CAN, AT LAST, TAKE
PLACE AMONG THEIR
FELLOWS?

WHERE THEY CAN
FIND **PEACE** AND
PURPOSE?

OR AN ALIEN, HOSTILE
EARTH, WHERE THEY
WILL BE ALONE, HUNTED,
KILLED?

NO WAY TO
KNOW. OUR SKIN
JUST TELLS US WHICH
TIME-STREAM WE
CAME FROM, NOT
THE ONE WE'RE
IN NOW.



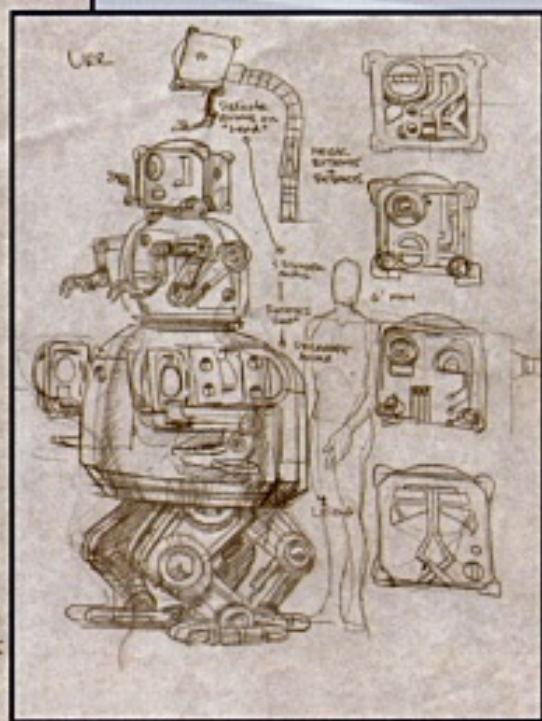
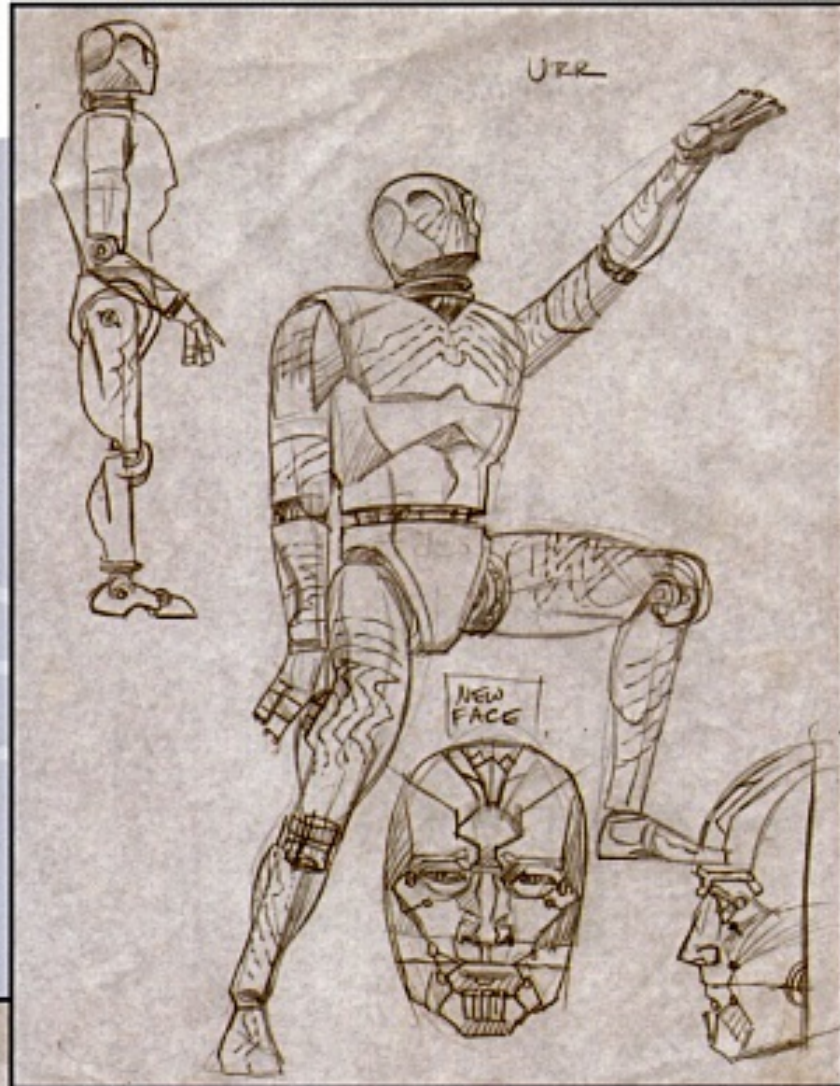


THEY FALL
TOWARD
AN EARTH.

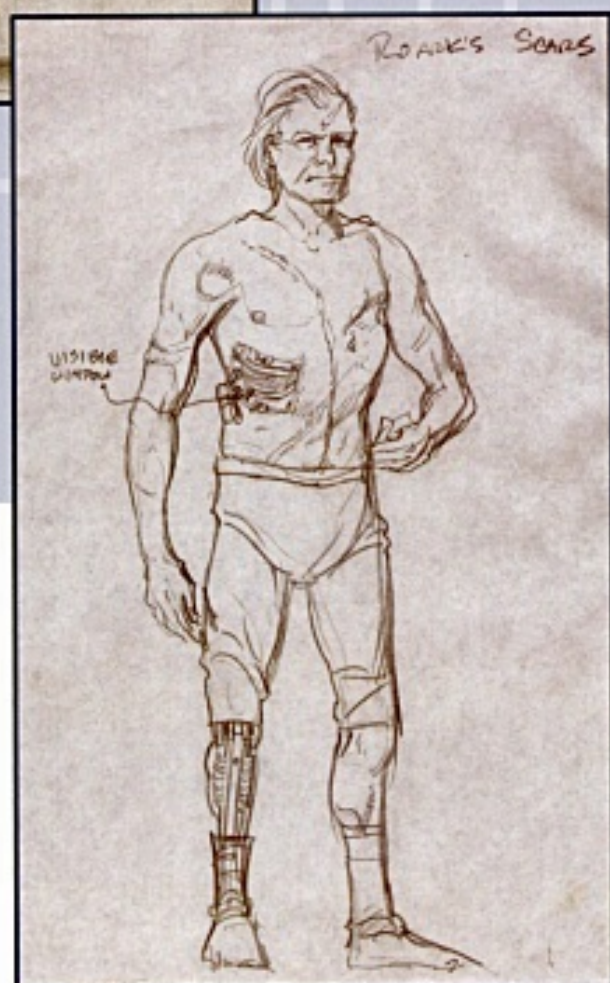
FIN





















HARLAN ELLISON was recently characterized by *The New York Times Book Review* as having "the spellbinding quality of a great nonstop talker, with a cultural warehouse for a mind." *The Los Angeles Times* suggested, "It's long past time for Harlan Ellison to be awarded the title: 20th century Lewis Carroll." And the *Washington Post Book World* said simply, "One of the great living American short story writers."

He has written or edited 75 books; more than 1,700 stories, essays, articles, and newspaper columns; two dozen teleplays, for which he received the Writers Guild of America most outstanding teleplay award for solo work an unprecedented *four* times; and a dozen movies. He won the Mystery Writers of America Edgar Allan Poe Award twice, the Horror Writers Association Bram Stoker Award six times (including The Lifetime Achievement Award in 1996), the Nebula three times, the Hugo 8 1/2 times, and received the Silver Pen for Journalism from P.E.N. Not to mention The World Fantasy Award, the British Fantasy Award, the American Mystery Award, two Audie Awards, the Ray Bradbury Award, and a Grammy nomination for Spoken Word recordings.

Mr. Ellison worked as a consultant and host for the radio series 2000^x, a series of 26 one-hour dramatized radio adaptations of famous SF stories for The Hollywood Theater of the Ear. The series was broadcast on National Public Radio (NPR) in 2000 and 2001. Ellison's classic story "Repent, Harlequin!" Said the Ticktockman" was included as part of this significant series, starring Robin Williams, with the author in the role of Narrator. Harlan Ellison was awarded the Ray Bradbury Award For Drama Series: For Program Host & Creative Consultant: NPR Presentation of 2000^x.

He created great fantasies for *The Twilight Zone* (including Danny Kaye's final performance) and *The Outer Limits*; traveled with The Rolling Stones; marched with Martin Luther King from Selma to Montgomery; once stood off the son of a Mafia kingpin with a Remington XP-100, while wearing nothing but a bath towel — and probably is the most contentious person now walking the Earth. But the bottom line, as voiced by *Booklist* last year, is this: "One thing's for sure: the man can write."

PAUL CHADWICK has worked widely as an artist and writer for comics, with collaborators like Ron Randall, Doug Wheatley, Alan Moore, John Bolton, Jan Strnad, Randy Stradley, Archie Goodwin, Brian K. Vaughan, and others. He's most noted for his award-winning series *Concrete*.

After graduating from Art Center College of Design in 1979, he began storyboarding movies for Disney, Warner Bros., Lucasfilm and others. Credits include *Pee Wee's Big Adventure*, *Strange Brew*, *The Big Easy* and *Ewoks: The Battle for Endor*. He also freelanced illustration for movie advertising and for SF and fantasy paperbacks.

Chadwick then decided to devote himself to comics, though occasionally he's pulled out of the field; he was lead writer of continuity for the MMORPG *The Matrix Online*, based on the *Matrix* movies. His most recent *Concrete* comic was *Three Uneasy Pieces*.

He lives on San Juan Island in Washington State with his wife Elizabeth, also an artist.

